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James Wm Mc Culloh's

THE

PLEASURES

OF

IMAGINATION.

BY

MARK AKENSIDE, M.D.

A NEW EDITION.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A CRITICAL ESSAY ON THE POEM,

BY MRS. BARBAULD.

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ESSAY

ON

AKENSIDE's POEM

ON THE

PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION.

DIDACTIC, or preceptive Poetry, seems to include a solecism, for the end of Poetry is to please, and of Didactic precept the object is instruction. It is, however, a species of Poetry which has been cultivated from the earliest stages of society; at first, probably, for the simple purpose of retaining, by means of the regularity of measure, and the charms of harmony, the precepts of agricultural wisdom, and the aphorisms of economical experience. When Poetry came to be cultivated for its

own sake, it was natural to esteem the Didactic, as in that view it certainly is, as a species of inferior merit compared with those which are more peculiarly the work of the imagination; and accordingly in the more splendid era of our own Poetry it has been much less cultivated than many others. Afterwards, when Poetry was become an art, and the more obvious sources of description and adventure were in some measure exhausted, the Didactic was resorted to, as affording that novelty and variety which began to be the great desideratum in works of fancy. This species of writing is likewise favoured by the diffusion of knowledge, by which many subjects become proper for general reading, which in a less informed state of society would have savoured of pedantry and abstruse speculation. For poetry cannot descend to teach the elements of any art or science, or confine itself to that regular arrangement and clear brevity which suits the communication of unknown truths. In fact, the Muse would

make a very indifferent school-mistress. Whoever therefore reads a Didactic Poem ought to come to it with a previous knowiedge of his subject; and whoever writes one, ought to suppose such a knowledge in his readers. If he is obliged to explain technical terms, to refer continually to critical notes, and to follow a system step by step with the patient exactness of a teacher, his Poem, however laboured, will be a bad Poem. His office is rather to throw a lustre on such prominent parts of his system as are most susceptible of poetical ornament, and to kindle the enthusiasm of those feelings which the truths he is conversant with are fitted to inspire. In that beautiful Poem, the Essay on Man, the *system* of the author, if in reality he had any system, is little attended to, but those passages which breathe the love of Virtue are read with delight, and fix themselves on the memory. Where the reader has this previous knowledge of the subject, which we have mentioned as necessary, the *art* of the

Poet becomes itself a source of pleasure, and sometimes in proportion to the remoteness of the subject forms the more obvious province of Poetry; we are delighted to find with how much dexterity the artist of verse can avoid a technical term, how neatly he can turn an uncouth word, and with how much grace embellish a scientific idea. Who does not admire the infinite art with which Dr. DARWIN has described the machine of Sir RICHARD ARKWRIGHT? His verse is a piece of mechanism as complete in its kind as that which he describes. Allured perhaps too much by this artificial species of excellence, and by the hopes of novelty, hardly any branch of knowledge has been so abstruse, or so barren of delight as not to have afforded a subject to the Didactic Poet. Even the loathsomeness of disease, and the dry maxims of medical knowledge, have been decorated with the charms of Poetry. Many of these pieces, however, owe all their entertainment to frequent digressions. Where

these arise naturally out of the subject, as the description of a sheep-shearing feast in DYER, or the praises of Italy in the Georgics, they are not only allowable but graceful; but if forced, as is the story of ORPHEUS and EURYDICE in the same Poem, they can be considered in no other light than that of beautiful monsters, and injure the piece they are meant to adorn. The subject of a Didactic Poem therefore ought to be such as is in itself attractive to the man of taste, for otherwise, all attempts to make it so by adventitious ornaments, will be but like loading with jewels and drapery a figure originally defective and ill made.

Of all the subjects which have engaged the attention of Didactic Poets, there is not perhaps a happier than that made choice of by AKENSIDE, *The Pleasures of Imagination*, in which every step of the disquisition calls up objects of the most attractive kind, and Fancy is made as it were to hold a mirror to her own charms. Imagination is the very source

and well-head of Poetry, and nothing forced or foreign to the Muse could easily flow from such a subject. Accordingly we see that the author has kept close to his system, and has admitted neither episode nor digression: the allegory in the second book, which is introduced for the purpose of illustrating his theory, being all that can properly be called ornament in this whole Poem. It must be acknowledged, however, that engaging as his subject is to minds prepared to examine it, to the generality of readers it must appear dry and abstruse. It is a work which offers us entertainment, but not of that easy kind amidst which the mind remains passive, and has nothing to do but to receive impressions. Those who have studied the metaphysics of mind, and who are accustomed to investigate abstract ideas, will read it with a lively pleasure; but those who seek mere amusement in a Poem, will find many far inferior ones better suited to their purpose. The judicious admirer of

AKENSIDE will not call people from the fields and the highways to partake of his feast; he will wish none to read that are not capable of understanding him.

The ground-work of *The Pleasures of Imagination* is to be found in ADDISON's Essays on the same subject, published in the Spectator. Except in the book which treats on Ridicule, and even of that the hint is there given, our author follows nearly the same track; and he is indebted to them not only for the leading thoughts and grand division of his subject, but for much of the colouring also: for the papers of ADDISON are wrought up with so much elegance of language, and adorned with so many beautiful illustrations, that they are equal to the most finished Poem. Perhaps the obligations of the Poet to the Essay-writer are not sufficiently adverted to, the latter being only slightly mentioned in the preface to the Poem. It is not meant, however, to insinuate that AKENSIDE had not various other

sources of his ideas. He sat down to this work, which was published at the early age of three and twenty, warm from the schools of ancient philosophy, whose spirit he had deeply imbibed, and full of enthusiasm for the treasures of Greek and Roman literature. The works of no author have a more classic air than those of our Poet. His hymn to the Naïads shows the most intimate acquaintance with their mythology. Their laws, their arts, their liberty, were equally objects of his warm admiration, and are frequently referred to in various parts of his Poems. He was fond of the Platonic philosophy, and mingled with the splendid visions of the Academic school, ideas of the fair and beautiful, in morals and in taste, gathered from the writings of SHAFTESBURY, HUTCHINSON, and others of that stamp, who then very much engaged the notice of the public. Educated in the university of Edinburgh, he joined to his classic literature the keen discriminating spirit of metaphysic inquiry, and the taste for moral

beauty which has so much distinguished our Northern seminaries, and which the celebrity of their professors, and the genius of the place, has never failed of communicating to their disciples. Thus prepared, by nature with genius, and by education with the previous studies and habits of thinking, he was peculiarly fitted for writing a philosophical Poem.

The first lines contain the definition of the subject, which he has judiciously varied from his master, Addison, who expressly confines the pleasures of imagination to "such as arise from visible objects only;" and divides them into "the primary pleasures of the imagination, which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes, and those secondary pleasures of the imagination which flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious." This

definition seems to exclude a blind man from any share whatever of those pleasures: and yet who would deny that the elegant mind of BLACKLOCK was capable of receiving, and even of imparting them in no small degree? Our author, therefore, includes every source, by which, through any of our senses or perceptions, we receive notices of the world around us; as well as the reflex pleasures derived from the imitative arts.

With what attractive charms this goodly frame
Of nature touches the consenting hearts
Of mortal men, and what the pleasing stores
Which beauteous Imitation thence derives
To deck the Poet's or the Painter's toil,
My verse unfolds.

After this clear and concise definition, and a lively and appropriate invocation to the powers of Fancy, guided by Truth and Liberty, the author begins by unfolding the Platonic idea that the universe, with all its forms of material beauty, was called into

being from its prototype, existing from all eternity in the Divine Mind. The different propensities that human beings are born with to various pursuits, are enumerated in some very beautiful lines, and *those* are declared to be the most noble which lead a chosen few to the love and contemplation of the Supreme Beauty, by the love and contemplation of his works. The Poet thus immediately, and at the very outset, dignifies his theme, by connecting it with the sublimest feelings the human mind is capable of entertaining, feelings without which the various scenes of this beautiful universe degenerate into gaudy shows, fit to catch the eye of children, but uninteresting to the heart and affections; and those laws and properties about which Philosophy busies herself, into a bewildering mass of unconnected experiments and independent facts. The lines afford more than one example of climax, graceful repetition, and richness of poetic language. The subject is then branched out into the three grand divisions marked by Addison,

the *Sublime*, the *Wonderful*, and the *Beautiful*. Each is exemplified with equal judgment and taste, but the sublime is perhaps expressed with most energy, as it certainly was most congenial to the mind of our author. The passage, of which the thought is borrowed from LONGINUS, *Say why was man so eminently raised*, is almost unequalled in grandeur of thought and loftiness of expression, yet it has not the appearance, as some other parts of the Poem have, of being laboured into excellence, but rather of being thrown off at once amidst the swell and fervency of a kindled imagination. The final cause of each of these propensities is happily insinuated; of the sense of the sublime, to lead us to the contemplation of the Supreme Being; of that of novelty to awaken us to constant activity; of beauty to mark out to us the objects most perfect in their kind. Thus does he make Philosophy and Poetry to go hand in hand. The exemplification of the love of novelty in the audience of the *village matron*, who

tells of *witching rhymes and evil spirits*, is highly wrought. The author, however, had doubtless in his mind not only the Essays of ADDISON, which were immediately under his eye, but that passage in another paper where he represents the circle at his landlady's closing their ranks, and crowding round the fire at the conclusion of every story of ghosts: *Around the beldam all arrect they hang; Congealed with shivering sighs*, very happily expresses the effects of that kind of terror, which makes a man shrink into himself, and feel afraid, as it were, to draw a full inspiration. It may be doubted, however, whether the attraction which is felt towards these kind of sensations when they rise to terror, can be fairly referred to the love of novelty. It seems rather to depend on that charm, afterwards touched upon, which is attached to every thing that strongly stirs and agitates the mind. In his description of Beauty, which is adorned with all the graces of the chaster VENUS, the author takes

occasion to aim a palpable stroke at the Night Thoughts of Dr. YOUNG, which are here characterized by "the ghostly gloom of graves and hoary vaults and cloistered cells, by walking with spectres through the midnight shade, and attuning the dreadful workings of his heart to the accursed song of the screaming owl." The same allusion is repeated in one of his Odes:

"Nor where the boding raven chaunts,
Nor near the owl's unhallow'd haunts
Will she (the Muse) her cares employ;
She flies from ruins, and from tombs,
From Superstition's horrid glooms,
To day-light and to joy."

This antipathy is not surprising; for never were two Poets more contrasted. Our author had more of taste and judgment, YOUNG more of originality. AKENSIDE maintains throughout an uniform dignity, YOUNG has been characteristically described in a late Poem as one in whom

Still gleams and still expires the cloudy day
Of genuine Poetry.

The genius of the one was clouded over with the deepest glooms of Calvinism, to which system, however, he owed some of his most striking beauties. The religion of the other, all at least that appears of it, and all indeed that could with propriety appear in such a Poem, is the purest Theism; liberal, cheerful, and sublime; or, if admitting any mixture, he seems inclined to tincture it with the mysticism of PLATO, and the gay fables of ancient mythology. The one declaims against infidels, the other against monks; the one resembles the Gothic, the other the Grecian architecture; the one has been read with deep interest by many who, when they have abandoned the tenets of orthodoxy, can scarcely bear to re-peruse him; the other, dealing more in general truths, will always be read with pleasure, though he will never make so deep an impression.

The Poem goes on to trace the connection of beauty with truth, by showing that all the beauty we admire

in vegetable or animal life results from the fitness of the object to the use for which it is intended, and serves as a kind of stamp, set by the Creator to point out the health, soundness, and perfection of the form in which it resides. This leads him on to speak of moral beauty, and tracing the regular gradations of beauty through colour, shape, symmetry, and grace, to its highest character in the expression of moral feelings, he breaks out into an animated apostrophe,

> Mind, mind alone—the living fountain in itself contains
> Of beauteous or sublime.

The poem continues in a high strain of noble enthusiasm to the end of the book, and concludes with an invocation to the genius of ancient Greece, with whose philosophy and high sense of liberty he was equally enamoured. It is easy for the reader who is conversant in the writings of SHAFTESBURY and HUTCHINSON to perceive how much their elegant and fascinating system is adapted to ennoble our

author's subject, and how much the *Pleasures of Imagination* are raised in value and importance by building the throne of Virtue so near the bower of Beauty. The book is complete in itself; and if we may be allowed to hazard a conjecture, contains nearly the whole of what the author on the first view might think necessary to his subject.

The second book opens with a complaint founded, perhaps, rather in a partiality for the ancients than attention to fact, of the disunion in modern times of Philosophy and Poetry. To the same classic prejudice (to which a good scholar is very prone) may be attributed the mention of the courtly compliments which debased the verse of TASSO; and the superstitious legends which employed the pencil of RAPHAEL in contradistinction to the works of the ancients, as if, in sober truth, any one was prepared to assert that there was less flattery in the Augustan age, and less superstition in the idle mythology of HOMER and OVID. Such prejudices

ought to be laid aside with the gradus of the school-boy. The Poet proceeds to consider the accession to the Pleasures of the Imagination from adventitious circumstances, of which he gives various instances: that of the Newtonian theory of the rainbow seems too abstruse even for a philosophical Poem; it may be doubted whether, if understood, it is of a nature to mix well with the pleasure of colours; it certainly does not accord well with that of verse. The influence of Passion is next considered, and the mysterious pleasure which is mixed with the energies and emotions of those passions that are in their own nature painful. To solve this problem, which has been one in all ages, a long allegory is introduced, which, though wrought up with a good deal of the decoration of Poetry, is nearly as difficult to comprehend as the problem itself. It begins with presenting a scene of desolation, *where the parched adder dies;* this vanishes, and another is presented. What we hoped to have heard from the Poet, we

are directed to learn from old HARMODIUS. HARMODIUS is only introduced to refer us to the Genius, and the Genius shifts his scenes like the pictures of a magic lantern, before he explains to us the scope and purport of the visions. The figures of Pleasure and Virtue are in a good measure copied from the choice of HERCULES, only that, as EUPHROSYNE is the Goddess of innocent pleasure, every thing voluptuous is left out of the picture. The description of the son of NEMESIS is wrought up with much strength of colouring. The story is in fact the introduction of evil, accounted for by the necessity of training the pupil of Providence to the love of virtue, the supreme good, by withdrawing from him for a while the allurements of pleasure; but why his very suffering should be attended with pleasure, which was the phenomenon to be accounted for, is not so clearly made out. We are told indeed that the youth is willing to bear the frowns of the son of NEMESIS in all their horrors, provided

EUPHROSYNE will bless him with her smiles, that is to say, he is willing to be miserable provided he may be happy at the same time. Upon this EUPHROSYNE appears, and declares that she will always be present for the future, whenever, supported by Virtue, he sustains a combat with Pain. So far indeed we may gather from this representation, that pleasure is always annexed to the exercise of our moral feelings, which is probably the true account of the matter: but this truth is rather darkened than illustrated by the fable, which does not satisfactorily explain *how* the connection is produced. The allegory is not very consistent in another place, where we are told that Virtue had left the youth, while at the same time *sweetest innocence illumed his bashful eyes*. He had already fallen, and yet he had not lost his innocence; the storm of wrath which falls upon him is therefore unaccounted for. Upon the whole, though this allegory is in many parts ingenious, and is laboured into splendid poetry, we fear it

has the effect upon most readers which it seems it had upon the author himself, who tells us that

Awhile he stood
Perplex'd and giddy.

It may be doubted whether this discussion is strictly within the bounds of the subject, *the Pleasures of Imagination*; since the instances given are not confined to scenic representation, but refer to the primary feelings of the passions. What has imagination to do with

The bitter shower
Which sorrow sheds upon a brother's grave?

The book concludes with an animated and pathetic exemplification of the gratification felt in the indulgence of mournful sympathy, or generous indignation; the latter pointed against the two things the author most hated, superstition and tyranny.

The third book touches upon a difficult and ungrateful subject for the poetic art, *the Pleasures of Ridicule*. It involves the question, much agitated

at that time, whether ridicule be the test of truth. Our author follows the system of SHAFTESBURY, which drew upon him an attack from Bishop WARBURTON, and he was defended by his friend and patron JEREMIAH DYSON. To say truth, it is easier to defend the Philosopher than the Poet. There is much acuteness in the theory, and much art exhibited in giving a poetical dress to the various illustrations he makes use of; but after all, the subject is so barren in itself, and so unsuitable to the solemn manner of AKENSIDE, that we admire without pleasure, and acquiesce without interest. He promises indeed to

> Unbend his serious measure, and reveal
> In lighter strains, how Folly's aukward arts
> Excite impetuous Laughter's gay rebuke,
> The sportive province of the comic Muse:

But he has not kept his promise: neither indeed could he, for besides that no one was ever less capable than our author of *unbending*, the object of

his disquisition is not to make us laugh, but to tell us why we laugh: a very different problem, and very remote from any ideas of pleasantry. Nor could he, without violating uniformity, change the measure of his Poem, otherwise this part of his subject not affording any play, for the higher beauties and bolder sweep of blank verse, would have been better treated of in the neat and terse couplet, after the manner of POPE's Ethical Epistles, or YOUNG's Satires. He begins, agreeably to the system he had embraced, with deducing all deviations from rectitude or propriety, from false opinions, imbibed in early youth, which attract the imagination by fallacious shews of good. Of these false opinions the more serious lead to vice, while those which refer to the less important particulars of our conduct betray to ridicule, the source of which is *incongruity*, and its final cause the assisting the tardy deductions of reason by the quick impulse of an instinctive sense.

The theory is beautiful and well supported. Illustrations of every different species of the ridiculous are given in the Poem; the notes are judicious, and tend still more to elucidate the subject. Still it must be confessed the theme is not a poetical one; and it may be even questioned how far it is connected with the subject; for the sense of ridicule is of a very peculiar nature, and is hardly included, in common language, among the Pleasures of the Imagination. If however the reader is inclined to be dissatisfied with this part of his entertainment, let him recollect, that if it affords him less pleasure, it probably cost the author more pains than any other portion of his Poem. It is asserted that under the appellation of MOMION, the writer has thrown out a sarcasm, not undeserved, against the celebrated author of the Dunciad; for surely no man of a just moral taste can reflect, without regret, that a capital work of one of our best Poets, composed in the height of his reputation, and during the

perfection of all his powers, should have no other end than to gratify the spleen of an offended author, and to record the petty warfare of rival wits. It is an observation of the excellent HARTLEY, that those studies which confine the mind within the exercise of its own powers, as criticism, poetry, and most philological pursuits, are apt to generate a supercilious deportment and an anxious and selfish regard to reputation: whereas the pursuit of truth, carrying the mind *out* of itself to large views of nature and providence, fills it with sublime and generous feelings. The remark must undoubtedly be taken with great latitude, but it seems to be not intirely unfounded.

Having dismissed the account of Ridicule, so little susceptible of being adorned by his efforts, the Poet rises into a higher strain, and investigates that wonderful phenomenon from whence the Pleasures of Imagination chiefly seem to arise, the mysterious connection of moral ideas with visible objects.

Why, he asks, does the deep shade of a thick wood strike us with religious awe? Why does the lightsomeness and variety of a more airy landscape suggest to us the idea of gaiety and social mirth? Is there really any resemblance, or is it owing to early and frequent associations? He decides for the latter, and beautifully illustrates that great law on which the power of memory entirely depends. This leads him to consider the powers of imagination as residing in the human mind, when, after being stored by means of memory, with ideas of all that is great and beautiful in nature, the child of fancy combines and varies them in a new creation of its own, from whence the origin of Music, Painting, Poetry, and all those arts which give rise to the secondary or reflex pleasures, referred to in the latter part of his definition. This is accompanied by a glowing and animated description of the process of composition, written evidently with the pleasure a person of genius must have felt, when reflecting with

conscious triumph that he is exercising the powers he so well describes. He had probably likewise in his eye the well known lines of SHAKESPEAR,

The poet's eye in a fine phrenzy rolling.

The simile of the Parhelion is new and beautiful. The harp of MEMNON struck by the rays of the sun supplies him with another; and the sympathetic needles of STRADA with a third, which are the only ones in the Poem.

The *Cause* is next considered of the pleasure which we receive from all that strikes us with the sensation of Beauty in the material world. Concerning this there exist two opinions. One, that those objects we call beautiful are so really, and in their own nature, and must appear so to any being possessed of faculties capable of appreciating them. The other that beauty is a mere arbitrary thing, a sort of pleasing enchantment spread over the face of nature, a delusion, under which we see charms that do not at all result from the real properties of things, and which other intelligent beings it is pro-

bable do not perceive. This latter opinion our author has embraced as the most philosophical. It is not, we presume, the most pleasing, nor the most favourable to the dignity and importance of the Pleasures of Imagination; for their boasted connection with *truth* vanishes, except indeed in this sense that beauty as an arbitrary mark is used with precision, and is constantly found to denote the health and soundness of the object in which it appears to reside, and consequently is made subservient to utility: but the beautiful climax is destroyed by which the inferior kinds are connected with moral beauty, for how can what is real be connected with what is imaginary? unless indeed what would be a very dangerous doctrine, the sense of *moral beauty* itself were supposed to be dependent on our peculiar formation, and adapted only to our present state of existence. The Poet has here closely copied from Addison, both in opening the thought, and in the simile with which he illustrates it. He loses sight however of this unpoetical philosophy towards

the conclusion, where having observed that *taste* results from the natural quickness of all the perceptions he has enumerated, strengthened by adequate culture, he observes, that culture will not however destroy the peculiar bias which is impressed upon different minds towards the great, or the soft and beautiful. This he exemplifies in WALLER and SHAKESPEAR. He then winds up the whole by that noble and animated eulogium on the taste for the beauties of nature,

O blest of heaven, whom—

And having led the lover of the fair and beautiful through all the different gradations of excellence, he leaves the mind where alone it should rest, in the contemplation of the Supreme Excellence, and closes with the sublime idea, that in admiring the works of nature, we form our taste upon the conceptions of the Deity himself.

Much more might be said of the philosophy of this Poem, but the chief aim of this essay is to shew the poetical use he has made of his subject. Many

of the divisions might perhaps be differently arranged, and the theory in some instances improved, but for poetry it is sufficiently accurate, and in speculations of this shadowy nature, no person will be thoroughly content with even his own system after the lapse of any considerable portion of time.

IF the genius of AKENSIDE be to be estimated from this Poem, and it is certainly the most capital of his works, it will be found to be lofty and elegant, chaste, classical, and correct: not marked with strong traits of originality, not ardent, nor exuberant. His enthusiasm was rather of that kind which is kindled by reading and imbibing the spirit of authors, than by contemplating at first hand the works of Nature. As a versifier AKENSIDE is allowed to stand amongst those who have given the most finished models of blank verse. His periods are long, but harmonious, the cadences fall with grace, and the measure is supported with uniform

dignity. His Muse possesses the *mien erect, and high commanding gait.* We shall scarcely find a low or trivial expression introduced, a careless or unfinished line permitted to stand. His stateliness however is somewhat allied to stiffness. His verse is sometimes feeble through too rich a redundancy of ornament, and sometimes laboured into a degree of obscurity from too anxious a desire of avoiding natural and simple expressions. We do not conceive of him as *pouring easy his unpremeditated strain.* It is rather difficult to read, from the sense being extended sometimes through more than twenty lines; but when well read, fills and gratifies the ear with all the pomp of harmony. It is far superior to the compositions of his contemporary THOMSON (we speak now only of the measure), and more equal than MILTON, though inferior to his finest passages. It is indeed too equal not to be in some degree monotonous. He is fond of compound epithets, led to it perhaps by his fondness for the Greek, and delights in giving a classic air to his composi-

tions by using names and epithets the most remote from vulgar use. Like HOMER'S gods his poetry speaks a different language from that of common mortals.

That an author who lived to near fifty should have produced his most capital work at three and twenty, seems to imply (as his professional studies did not cause him to lay aside his poetical pursuits) a genius more early than extensive, a mind more refined than capacious. And that this was the case in reality, will appear from his having employed himself during several years in correcting and intirely new moulding this his favourite Poem. To correct to a certain degree is the duty of a man of sense, but always to correct will not be the employment of a man of spirit. It betrays a mind rather brooding with fond affection over old productions, than inspired by a fresh stream of new ideas. The flowers of fancy are apt to lose their odour by much handling, the glow is gone, and the ear itself after a certain time loses its tact amidst repeated

alterations, as the taste becomes confounded by the successive trial of different flavours.

The Edition which he was preparing was, however, left in too imperfect a state to justify its being presented to the public, at least of superseding the complete one which is here given, and which passed rapidly through many editions soon after its first appearance. In the posthumous Poem the ordonnance is greatly changed: *Novelty* is left out as a primary source of the Pleasure of the Imagination, and placed among the adventitious circumstances which only increase it: the greatest part of the lines on Ridicule is also omitted, and he has abandoned the idea of its being the test of truth, an idea which had given offence to the severer moralists. Instead of the allegory of Virtue and EUPHROSYNE, the third book consists of a story concerning SOLON, on which Dr. JOHNSON makes this single observation, that it is *too long*. The probability is that the critic never read it through: as, for the author's

purpose, it is too short, since it breaks off so abruptly, that though the purport is declared to be to show the origin of evil, the story is not far enough advanced to allow the reader even to guess at the intended solution. Of the fourth book the beginning is barely sketched. But had the whole been completed we may venture to pronounce, that, if the system was improved, the Poetry would have been weaker. He has amplified what had before a tendency to be redundant; he has rendered abstruse what was before sufficiently difficult of comprehension; and in proportion as he has departed from the chaste elegance of ADDISON, he has given to his subject a dry scholastic air, and involved it in metaphysical subtilties. Of amplification the following are instances. In the Poem before us we meet with the line

And painted shells indent their speckled wreaths.

Not being willing to let these shells pass without the lustre of an additional polish, he has altered it to

And painted shells along some winding shore
Catch with indented folds the glancing sun.

He had spoken in the former of

—the thymy vale
Where oft enchanted with Socratic sounds
Ilissus pure devolved his tuneful stream
In gentler murmurs.

The thought of a river listening to eloquence is but trite, and therefore sufficiently spread; but not content with the image, he has in the later work added Boreas and Orithyía to the dramatis personæ.

—— Where once beneath
That ever-living plantane's ample boughs
Ilissus by Socratic sounds detain'd
On his neglected urn attentive lay,
While Boreas lingering on the neighbouring steep
With beauteous Orithyía his love-tale
In silent awe suspended.

Sometimes, however, we meet with a happier image. The following is very picturesque:

—— O ye dales
Of Tyne, and ye most ancient woodlands, where
Oft as the *giant flood obliquely strides*
And his banks open ——

The following description of universal or primitive beauty, though somewhat too awful for a Venus, is striking, and merits preservation:

He, God most high,—Page 130 to
—and owns her charms,—Page 134.

On the whole, though we may not look upon AKENSIDE as one of those few born to *create* an era in Poetry, we may well consider him as formed to shine in the brightest; we may venture to predict that his work, which is not formed on any local or temporary subject, will continue to be a classic in our language; and we shall pay him the grateful regard which we owe to genius exerted in the cause of liberty and philosophy, of virtue and of taste.

THE

DESIGN.

THERE are certain powers in human nature which seem to hold a middle place between the organs of bodily sense, and the faculties of moral perception: they have been called by a very general name, *The Powers of Imagination.* Like the external senses, they relate to matter and motion; and, at the same time, give the mind ideas analogous to those of moral approbation and dislike. As they are the inlets of some of the most exquisite pleasures with which we are acquainted, it has naturally happened that men of warm and sensible tempers have sought means to recall the delightful perceptions which they afford, independent of the object which originally produced them. This gave rise to the imitative or designing arts; some of which, as

painting and sculpture, directly copy the external appearances which were admired in nature; others, as music and poetry, bring them back to remembrance by signs universally established and understood.

But these arts, as they grew more correct and deliberate, were of course led to extend their imitation beyond the peculiar object of the imaginative powers; especially poetry, which, making use of language as the instrument by which it imitates, it consequently becomes an unlimited representative of every species and mode of being. Yet, as their intention was only to express the objects of imagination, and as they still abound chiefly in ideas of that class, they of course retain their original character; and all the different pleasures which they excite are termed, in general, *Pleasures of Imagination.*

The design of the following poem is to give a view of *these* in the largest acceptation of the term;

so that whatever our imagination feels from the agreeable appearances of Nature, and all the various entertainment we meet with, either in poetry, painting, music, or any of the elegant arts, which might be deducible from one or other of those principles in the constitution of the human mind, are here established and explained.

In executing this general plan, it was necessary first of all to distinguish the Imagination from our other faculties ; and in the next place to characterize those original forms or properties of being, about which it is conversant, and which are by nature adapted to it, as light is to the eyes, or truth to the understanding. These properties Mr. Addison had reduced to the three general classes of greatness, novelty, and beauty ; and into these we may analyze every object, however complex, which, properly speaking, is delightful to the imagination. But such an object may also include many other sources of pleasure ; and its beauty, or novelty,

or grandeur, will make a stronger impression by reason of this concurrence. Besides which, the imitative arts, especially poetry, owe much of their effect to a *similar* exhibition of properties quite *foreign* to the imagination, insomuch, that in every line of the most applauded poems, we meet with either ideas drawn from the external senses, or truths discovered to the understanding, or illustrations of contrivance and final causes, or, above all the rest, with circumstances proper to awaken and engage the passions. It was therefore necessary to enumerate and exemplify these different species of pleasure; especially that from the passions, which, as it is supreme in the noblest work of human genius, so being in some particulars not a little surprising, gave an opportunity to enliven the didactic turn of the Poem, by introducing an allegory to account for the appearance.

After these parts of the subject which hold chiefly of admiration, or naturally warm and interest the

mind, a pleasure of a very different nature, that which arises from ridicule, came next to be considered. As this is the foundation of the comic manner in all the arts, and has been but very imperfectly treated by moral writers, it was thought proper to give it a particular illustration, and to distinguish the general sources from which the ridicule of characters is derived. Here too a change of style became necessary ; such a one as might yet be consistent, if possible, with the general taste of composition in the serious parts of the subject ; nor is it an easy task to give any tolerable force to images of this kind, without running either into the gigantic expressions of the mock heroic, or the familiar and poetical raillery of professed satire ; neither of which would have been proper here.

The materials of all imitation being thus laid open, nothing now remained but to illustrate some particular pleasures, which arise either from the relations of different objects one to another, or from the

nature of imitation itself. Of the first kind, is that various and complicated resemblance existing between several parts of the material and immaterial worlds, which is the foundation of metaphor and wit. As it seems in a great measure to depend on the early association of our ideas, and as this habit of associating is the source of many pleasures and pains in life, and on that account bears a great share in the influence of poetry and the other arts, it is therefore mentioned here, and its effects described. Then follows a general account of the production of these elegant arts, and of the secondary pleasure, as it is called, arising from the resemblance of their imitations to the original appearances of Nature. After which, the work concludes with some reflections on the general conduct of the powers of imagination, and on their natural and moral usefulness in life.

Concerning the manner or turn of composition which prevails in this piece, little can be said with

propriety by the author. He had two models; that ancient and simple one of the first Grecian poets, as it is refined by VIRGIL in the Georgics, and the familiar epistolary way of HORACE. This latter has several advantages. It admits of a greater variety of style; it more readily engages the generality of readers, as partaking more of the air of conversation; and, especially with the assistance of rhyme, leads to a closer and more concise expression. Add to this the example of the most perfect of modern poets, who has so happily applied this manner to the noblest parts of philosophy, that the public taste is in a great measure formed to it alone. Yet, after all, the subject before us, tending almost constantly to admiration and enthusiasm, seemed rather to demand a more open, pathetic, and figured style. This too appeared more natural, as the author's aim was not so much to give formal precepts, or enter into the way of direct argumentation, as, by exhibiting the most engaging prospects of

Nature, to enlarge and harmonize the imagination, and by that means insensibly dispose the minds of men to a similar taste and habit of thinking in religion, morals, and civil life. It is on this account that he is so careful to point out the benevolent intention of the Author of Nature in every principle of the human constitution here insisted on; and also to unite the moral excellencies of life in the same point of view with the mere external objects of good taste; thus recommending them in common to our natural propensity for admiring what is beautiful and lovely. The same views have also led him to introduce some sentiments which may perhaps be looked upon as not quite direct to the subject; but since they bear an obvious relation to it, the authority of VIRGIL, the faultless model of didactic poetry, will best support him in this particular. For the sentiments themselves, he makes no apology.

THE

FIRST BOOK

OF THE

PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION.

ARGUMENT.

The subject proposed.—Difficulty of treating it poetically.—The ideas of the divine mind, the origin of every quality pleasing to the imagination.—The natural variety of constitution in the minds of men; with its final cause.—The idea of a fine imagination, and the state of the mind in the enjoyment of those pleasures which it affords. All the primary pleasures of the imagination result from the perception of greatness, or wonderfulness, or beauty in objects.—The pleasure from greatness, with its final cause.—Pleasure from novelty, or wonderfulness, with its final cause.—Pleasure from beauty, with its final cause.—The connection of beauty with truth and good, applied to the conduct of life.—Invitation to the study of moral philosophy.—The different degrees of beauty in different species of objects: colour; shape; natural concretes; vegetables; animals; the mind.—The sublime, the fair, the wonderful of the mind.—The connection of the imagination and the moral faculty.—Conclusion.

THE

PLEASURES

OF

IMAGINATION.

BOOK I.

WITH what attractive charms this goodly frame
Of nature touches the consenting hearts
Of mortal men; and what the pleasing stores
Which beauteous imitation thence derives
To deck the poet's, or the painter's toil;
My verse unfolds. Attend, ye gentle powers
Of musical delight! and while I sing
Your gifts, your honours, dance around my strain.
Thou, smiling queen of every tuneful breast,
Indulgent Fancy! from the fruitful banks

Of Avon, whence thy rosy fingers cull
Fresh flowers and dews to sprinkle on the turf
Where Shakespear lies, be present; and with thee
Let Fiction come, upon her vagrant wings
Wafting ten thousand colours through the air,
Which by the glances of her magic eye
She blends and shifts at will, through countless forms,
Her wild creation. Goddess of the lyre,
Which rules the accents of the moving sphere,
Wilt thou, eternal Harmony! descend
And join this festive train? for with thee comes
The guide, the guardian of their lovely sports,
Majestic Truth: and where Truth deigns to come,
Her sister Liberty will not be far.
Be present all ye Genii, who conduct
The wandering footsteps of the youthful bard,
New to your springs and shades: who touch his ear
With finer sounds: who heighten to his eye
The bloom of Nature, and before him turn
The gayest, happiest attitude of things.

Oft have the laws of each poetic strain
The critic-verse employ'd; yet still unsung
Lay this prime subject, though importing most
A poet's name: for fruitless is the attempt,
By dull obedience and by creeping toil
Obscure to conquer the severe ascent
Of high Parnassus. Nature's kindling breath
Must fire the chosen genius; Nature's hand
Must string his nerves, and imp his eagle-wings
Impatient of the painful steep, to soar
High as the summit; there to breathe at large
Ætherial air; with bards and sages old,
Immortal sons of praise. The flattering scenes,
To this neglected labour court my song;
Yet not unconscious what a doubtful task
To paint the finest features of the mind,
And to most subtle and mysterious things
Give colour, strength, and motion. But the love
Of Nature and the Muses bids explore,
Through secret paths erewhile untrod by man,

The fair poetic region, to detect
Untasted springs, to drink inspiring draughts,
And shade my temples with unfading flowers
Cull'd from the laureate vale's profound recess,
Where never poet gain'd a wreath before.

From heaven my strains begin; from heaven descends
The flame of genius to the human breast,
And love and beauty, and poetic joy
And inspiration. Ere the radiant sun
Sprang from the East, or 'mid the vault of night
The moon suspended her serener lamp;
Ere mountains, woods, or streams, adorn'd the globe,
Or wisdom taught the sons of men her lore;
Then liv'd the Almighty One: then, deep-retir'd
In his unfathom'd essence, view'd the forms,
The forms eternal of created things;
The radiant sun, the moon's nocturnal lamp,
The mountains, woods, and streams, the rolling globe,
And wisdom's mien celestial. From the first

Of days, on them his love divine he fix'd,
His admiration: till in time complete,
What he admir'd and lov'd, his vital smile
Unfolded into being. Hence the breath
Of life informing each organic frame,
Hence the green earth, and wild resounding waves;
Hence light and shade alternate; warmth and cold;
And clear autumnal skies and vernal showers,
And all the fair variety of things.

But not alike to every mortal eye
Is this great scene unveil'd. For since the claims
Of social life, to different labours urge
The active powers of man; with wise intent
The hand of Nature on peculiar minds
Imprints a different bias, and to each
Decrees its province in the common toil.
To some she taught the fabric of the sphere,
The changeful moon, the circuit of the stars,
The golden zones of heaven: to some she gave

To weigh the moment of eternal things,
Of time, and space, and fate's unbroken chain,
And will's quick impulse: others by the hand
She led o'er vales and mountains, to explore
What healing virtue swells the tender veins
Of herbs and flowers; or what the beams of morn
Draw forth, distilling from the clifted rind
In balmy tears. But some, to higher hopes
Were destin'd; some within a finer mould
She wrought, and temper'd with a purer flame.
To these, the Sire Omnipotent unfolds
The world's harmonious volume, there to read
The transcript of himself. On every part
They trace the bright impressions of his hand:
In earth or air, the meadow's purple stores,
The moon's mild radiance, or the virgin's form
Blooming with rosy smiles, they see pourtray'd
That uncreated beauty, which delights
The mind supreme. They also feel her charms,
Enamour'd; they partake the eternal joy.

For as old Memnon's image, long renown'd
By fabling Nilus, to the quivering touch
Of Titan's ray, with each repulsive string
Consenting, sounded through the warbling air
Unbidden strains; even so did Nature's hand
To certain species of external things,
Attune the finer organs of the mind:
So the glad impulse of congenial powers,
Or of sweet sound, or fair proportion'd form,
The grace of motion, or the bloom of light,
Thrills through Imagination's tender frame,
From nerve to nerve: all naked and alive
They catch the spreading rays: till now the soul
At length discloses every tuneful spring,
To that harmonious movement from without
Responsive. Then the inexpressive strain
Diffuses its enchantment: Fancy dreams
Of sacred fountains and Elysian groves,
And vales of bliss; the intellectual power
Bends from his awful throne a wondering ear,

And smiles: the passions, gently sooth'd away,
Sink to divine repose, and love and joy
Alone are waking; love and joy, serene
As airs that fan the summer. Oh, attend,
Whoe'er thou art, whom these delights can touch,
Whose candid bosom the refining love
Of Nature warms, Oh, listen to my song;
And I will guide thee to her favourite walks,
And teach thy solitude her voice to hear,
And point her loveliest features to thy view.

Know then, whate'er of Nature's pregnant stores,
Whate'er of mimic art's reflected forms
With love and admiration thus inflame
The powers of Fancy, her delighted sons
To three illustrious orders have referr'd;
Three sister-graces, whom the painter's hand,
The poet's tongue, confesses; the sublime,
The wonderful, the fair. I see them dawn!
I see the radiant visions, where they rise,

More lovely than when Lucifer displays
His beaming forehead through the gates of morn,
To lead the train of Phœbus and the spring.

Say, why was man so eminently rais'd
Amid the vast creation, why ordain'd
Through life and death to dart his piercing eye,
With thoughts beyond the limit of his frame;
But that the Omnipotent might send him forth
In sight of mortal and immortal powers,
As on a boundless theatre, to run
The great career of justice; to exalt
His generous aim to all diviner deeds;
To chase each partial purpose from his breast;
And through the tossing tide of chance and pain,
To hold his course unfaultering, while the voice
Of Truth and Virtue up the steep ascent
Of Nature, calls him to his high reward,
The applauding smile of Heaven? Else wherefore burns

In mortal bosoms this unquenched hope,
That breathes from day to day sublimer things,
And mocks possession? wherefore darts the mind
With such resistless ardour to embrace
Majestic forms; impatient to be free,
Spurning the gross controul of wilful might;
Proud of the strong contention of her toils;
Proud to be daring? Who but rather turns
To Heaven's broad fire his unconstrained view,
Than to the glimmering of a waxen flame?
Who that, from Alpine heights, his labouring eye
Shoots round the wide horizon, to survey
Nilus or Ganges rolling his bright wave
Through mountains, plains, through empires black with shade,
And continents of sand; will turn his gaze
To mark the windings of a scanty rill
That murmurs at his feet? The high-born soul
Disdains to rest her heaven-aspiring wing
Beneath its native quarry. Tir'd of earth

And this diurnal scene, she springs aloft
Through fields of air; pursues the flying storm;
Rides on the vollied lightning through the heavens;
Or, yok'd with whirlwinds and the Northern blast,
Sweeps the long tract of day. Then high she soars
The blue profound, and hovering round the sun
Beholds him pouring the redundant stream
Of light; beholds his unrelenting sway
Bend the reluctant planets to absolve
The fated rounds of time. Thence far effus'd
She darts her swiftness up the long career
Of devious comets; through its burning signs
Exulting measures the perennial wheel
Of Nature, and looks back on all the stars,
Whose blended light, as with a milky zone,
Invests the orient. Now amaz'd she views
The empyreal waste, where happy spirits hold,
Beyond this concave heaven, their calm abode;
And fields of radiance, whose unfading light
Has travell'd the profound six thousand years,

Nor yet arrives in sight of mortal things.
Even on the barriers of the world untir'd
She meditates the eternal depth below;
Till half recoiling, down the headlong steep
She plunges; soon o'erwhelm'd and swallow'd up
In that immense of being. There her hopes
Rest at the fated goal. For from the birth
Of mortal man, the Sovereign Maker said,
That not in humble nor in brief delight,
Not in the fading echoes of renown,
Power's purple robes, nor pleasure's flowery lap,
The soul should find enjoyment: but from these
Turning disdainful to an equal good,
Through all the ascent of things enlarge her view,
Till every bound at length should disappear,
And infinite perfection close the scene.

Call now to mind what high capacious powers
Lie folded up in man; how far beyond
The praise of mortals, may the eternal growth

Of Nature to perfection half divine
Expand the blooming soul? What pity then
Should sloth's unkindly fogs depress to earth
Her tender blossom; choke the streams of life,
And blast her spring! Far otherwise design'd
Almighty wisdom; Nature's happy cares
The obedient heart far otherwise incline.
Witness the sprightly joy, when aught unknown
Strikes the quick sense, and wakes each active power
To brisker measures: witness the neglect
Of all familiar prospects, though beheld
With transport once; the fond attentive gaze
Of young astonishment; the sober zeal
Of age, commenting on prodigious things.
For such the bounteous providence of Heaven,
In every breast implanting this desire
Of objects new and strange, to urge us on
With unremitted labour to pursue
Those sacred stores that wait the ripening soul,
In Truth's exhaustless bosom. What need words

To paint its power? For this the daring youth
Breaks from his weeping mother's anxious arms,
In foreign climes to rove: the pensive sage,
Heedless of sleep, or midnight's harmful damp,
Hangs o'er the sickly temper; and untir'd
The virgin follows, with enchanted step,
The mazes of some wild and wondrous tale,
From morn to eve; unmindful of her form,
Unmindful of the happy dress that stole
The wishes of the youth, when every maid
With envy pin'd. Hence, finally, by night
The village-matron, round the blazing hearth,
Suspends the infant-audience with her tales,
Breathing astonishment! of witching rhymes
And evil spirits; of the death-bed call
Of him who robb'd the widow, and devour'd
The orphan's portion; of unquiet souls
Risen from the grave to ease the heavy guilt
Of deeds in life conceal'd; of shapes that walk
At dead of night, and clank their chains, and wave

T. Stothard del.ᵗ I. Neagle sculp.ᵗ

The Village Matron, round the blazing Hearth,
Suspends the infant-audience with her Tales,
Breathing astonishment!

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The torch of hell around the murderer's bed.
At every solemn pause the crowd recoil,
Gazing each other speechless, and congeal'd
With shivering sighs: till eager for the event,
Around the Beldame all arract they hang,
Each trembling heart with grateful terrors quell'd.

But lo! disclos'd in all her smiling pomp,
Where beauty onward moving claims the verse
Her charms inspire: the freely-flowing verse
In thy immortal praise, O form divine,
Smooths her mellifluent stream. Thee, beauty, thee
The regal dome, and thy enlivening ray
The mossy roofs adore: thou, better sun!
For ever beamest on the enchanted heart
Love, and harmonious wonder, and delight
Poetic. Brightest progeny of heaven!
How shall I trace thy features? where select
The roseate hues to emulate thy bloom?
Haste then, my song, through Nature's wide expanse,

Haste then, and gather all her comeliest wealth,
Whate'er bright spoils the florid earth contains,
Whate'er the waters, or the liquid air,
To deck thy lovely labour. Wilt thou fly
With laughing Autumn to the Alantic isles,
And range with him the Hesperian field, and see
Where'er his fingers touch the fruitful grove,
The branches shoot with gold; where'er his step
Marks the glad soil, the tender clusters grow
With purple ripeness, and invest each hill
As with the blushes of an evening sky?
Or wilt thou rather stoop thy vagrant plume,
Where gliding thro' his daughter's honour'd shades,
The smooth Penéus from his glassy flood
Reflects purpureal Tempe's pleasant scene?
Fair Tempe! haunt belov'd of sylvan powers,
Of nymphs and fauns; where in the golden age
They play'd in secret on the shady brink
With ancient Pan: while round their choral steps
Young hours and genial gales with constant hand

Shower'd blossoms, odours, shower'd ambrosial dews
And spring's Elysian bloom. Her flowery store
To thee nor Tempe shall refuse; nor watch
Of winged Hydra guard Hesperian fruits
From thy free spoil. Oh bear then unreprov'd,
Thy smiling treasures to the green recess
Where young Dione stays. With sweetest airs
Intice her forth to lend her angel-form
For beauty's honour'd image. Hither turn
Thy graceful footsteps; hither, gentle maid,
Incline thy polished forehead: let thy eyes
Effuse the mildness of their azure dawn;
And may the fanning breezes waft aside
Thy radiant locks: disclosing, as it bends
With airy softness from the marble neck,
The cheek fair-blooming, and the rosy lip,
Where winning smiles and pleasures sweet as love,
With sanctity and wisdom, tempering blend
Their soft allurement. Then the pleasing force
Of Nature, and her kind parental care

Worthier I'd sing: then all the enamour'd youth,
With each admiring virgin, to my lyre
Should throng attentive, while I point on high
Where beauty's living image, like the morn
That wakes in Zephyr's arms the blushing May,
Moves onward; or as Venus, when she stood
Effulgent on the pearly car, and smil'd,
Fresh from the deep, and conscious of her form,
To see the Tritons tune their vocal shells,
And each cœrulean sister of the flood
With loud acclaim attend her o'er the waves
To seek the Idalian bower. Ye smiling band
Of youths and virgins, who through all the maze
Of young desire with rival steps pursue
This charm of beauty; if the pleasing toil
Can yield a moment's respite, hither turn
Your favourable ear, and trust my words.
I do not mean to wake the gloomy form
Of Superstition dress'd in Wisdom's garb,
To damp your tender hopes; I do not mean

To bid the jealous thunderer fire the heavens,
Or shapes infernal rend the groaning earth
To fright you from your joys: my cheerful song
With better omens calls you to the field,
Pleas'd with your generous ardour in the chase,
And warm like you. Then tell me, for ye know,
Does Beauty ever deign to dwell where health
And active use are strangers? Is her charm
Confess'd in aught, whose most peculiar ends
Are lame and fruitless? Or did Nature mean
This pleasing call the herald of a lie;
To hide the shame of discord and disease,
And catch with fair hypocrisy the heart
Of idle faith? Oh no! with better cares
The indulgent mother, conscious how infirm
Her offspring treads the paths of good and ill,
By this illustrious image, in each kind
Still most illustrious where the object holds
Its native powers most perfect, she by this
Illumes the headstrong impulse of desire,

And sanctifies his choice. The generous glebe
Whose bosom smiles with verdure, the clear tract
Of streams delicious to the thirsty soul,
The bloom of nectar'd fruitage ripe to sense,
And every charm of animated things,
Are only pledges of a state sincere,
The integrity and order of their frame,
When all is well within, and every end
Accomplish'd. Thus was Beauty sent from heaven,
The lovely ministress of truth and good
In this dark world: for truth and good are one,
And beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation. Wherefore then,
O sons of earth! would ye dissolve the tie?
Oh wherefore, with a rash impetuous aim,
Seek ye those flowery joys with which the hand
Of lavish fancy paints each flattering scene
Where beauty seems to dwell, nor once inquire
Where is the sanction of eternal truth,
Or where the seal of undeceitful good,

To save your search from folly? Wanting these,
Lo! beauty withers in your void embrace,
And with the glittering of an ideot's toy
Did fancy mock your vows. Nor let the gleam
Of youthful hope that shines upon your hearts,
Be chill'd or clouded at this awful task,
To learn the lore of undeceitful good,
And truth eternal. Though the poisonous charms
Of baleful superstition guide the feet
Of servile numbers through a dreary way
To their abode, through deserts, thorns and mire;
And leave the wretched pilgrim all forlorn
To muse at last, amid the ghostly gloom
Of graves, and hoary vaults, and cloister'd cells;
To walk with spectres through the midnight shade,
And to the screaming owl's accursed song
Attune the dreadful workings of his heart;
Yet be not ye dismay'd. A gentler star
Your lovely search illumines. From the grove
Where Wisdom talk'd with her Athenian sons,

Could my ambitious hand intwine a wreath
Of Plato's olive with the Mantuan bay,
Then should my powerful verse at once dispel
Those monkish horrors: then in light divine
Disclose the Elysian prospect, where the steps
Of those whom Nature charms thro' blooming walks,
Thro' fragrant mountains and poetic streams,
Amid the train of sages, heroes, bards,
Led by their winged genius and the choir
Of laurel'd science, and harmonious art,
Proceed exulting to the eternal shrine,
Where Truth conspicuous with her sister-twins,
The undivided partners of her sway,
With Good and Beauty reigns. Oh let not us,
Lull'd by luxurious pleasure's languid strain,
Or crouching to the frowns of bigot-rage,
Oh let us not a moment pause to join
That god-like band. And if the gracious power
Who first awaken'd my untutor'd song,
Will to my invocation breathe anew

The tuneful spirit; then through all our paths,
Ne'er shall the sound of this devoted lyre
Be wanting; whether on the rosy mead,
When summer smiles, to warn the melting heart
Of luxury's allurement; whether firm
Against the torrent and the stubborn hill
To urge bold virtue's unremitted nerve,
And wake the strong divinity of soul
That conquers chance and fate; or whether struck
For sounds of triumph, to proclaim her toils
Upon the lofty summit, round her brow
To twine the wreath of incorruptive praise;
To trace her hallow'd light through future worlds,
And bless Heaven's image in the heart of man.

Thus with a faithful aim have we presum'd,
Adventurous, to delineate Nature's form;
Whether in vast, majestic pomp array'd,
Or drest for pleasing wonder, or serene
In Beauty's rosy smile. It now remains,

Through various being's fair-proportion'd scale,
To trace the rising lustre of her charms,
From their first twilight, shining forth at length
To full meridian splendor. Of degree
The least and lowliest, in the effusive warmth
Of colours mingling with a random blaze,
Doth Beauty dwell. Then higher in the line
And variation of determin'd shape,
Where Truth's eternal measures mark the bound
Of circle, cube, or sphere. The third ascent
Unites this varied symmetry of parts
With colour's bland allurement; as the pearl
Shines in the concave of its azure bed,
And painted shells indent their speckled wreath.
Then more attractive rise the blooming forms
Through which the breath of Nature has infus'd
Her genial power to draw with pregnant veins
Nutritious moisture from the bounteous earth,
In fruit and seed prolific: thus the flowers
Their purple honours with the spring resume;

And such the stately tree which autumn bends
With blushing treasures. But more lovely still
Is Nature's charm, where to the full consent
Of complicated members, to the bloom
Of colour, and the vital change of growth,
Life's holy flame and piercing sense are given,
And active motion speaks the temper'd soul:
So moves the bird of Juno; so the steed
With rival ardour beats the dusty plain,
And faithful dogs with eager airs of joy
Salute their fellows. Thus doth beauty dwell
There most conspicuous, even in outward shape,
Where dawns the high expression of a mind:
By steps conducting our enraptur'd search
To that eternal origin, whose power,
Through all the unbounded symmetry of things,
Like rays effulging from the parent sun,
This endless mixture of her charms diffus'd.
Mind, mind alone, (bear witness, earth and heaven!)
The living fountains in itself contains

Of beauteous and sublime: here hand in hand,
Sit paramount the graces; here enthron'd,
Cœlestial Venus, with divinest airs,
Invites the soul to never-fading joy.
Look then abroad through Nature, to the range
Of planets, suns, and adamantine spheres
Wheeling unshaken through the void immense;
And speak, O man! does this capacious scene
With half that kindling majesty dilate
Thy strong conception, as when Brutus rose
Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar's fate,
Amid the crowd of patriots; and his arm
Aloft extending, like eternal Jove
When guilt brings down the thunder, call'd aloud
On Tully's name, and shook his crimson steel,
And bade the father of his country, hail!
For lo! the tyrant prostrate on the dust,
And Rome again is free! Is aught so fair
In all the dewy landscapes of the spring,
In the bright eye of Hesper or the morn,

In Nature's fairest forms, is ought so fair
As virtuous friendship? As the candid blush
Of him who strives with fortune to be just?
The graceful tear that streams for others' woes?
Or the mild majesty of private life,
Where peace with ever-blooming olive crowns
The gate; where honour's liberal hands effuse
Unenvied treasures, and the snowy wings
Of innocence and love protect the scene?
Once more search, undismay'd, the dark profound
Where Nature works in secret; view the beds
Of mineral treasure, and the eternal vault
That bounds the hoary ocean; trace the forms
Of atoms moving with incessant change
Their elemental round; behold the seeds
Of being, and the energy of life
Kindling the mass with ever-active flame:
Then to the secrets of the working mind
Attentive turn; from dim oblivion call
Her fleet, ideal band; and bid them, go!

Break through Time's barrier, and o'ertake the hour
That saw the heavens created: then declare
If aught were found in those external scenes
To move thy wonder now. For what are all
The forms which brute, unconscious matter wears,
Greatness of bulk, or symmetry of parts?
Not reaching to the heart, soon feeble grows
The superficial impulse; dull their charms,
And satiate soon, and pall the languid eye.
Not so the moral species, nor the powers
Of genius and design; the ambitious mind
There sees herself: by these congenial forms
Touch'd and awaken'd, with intenser act
She bends each nerve, and meditates well-pleas'd
Her features in the mirror. For of all
The inhabitants of earth, to man alone
Creative wisdom gave to lift his eye
To Truth's eternal measures; thence to frame
The sacred laws of action and of will,
Discerning justice from unequal deeds,

And temperance from folly. But beyond
This energy of truth, whose dictates bind
Assenting reason, the benignant Sire,
To deck the honour'd paths of just and good,
Has added bright imagination's rays:
Where virtue, rising from the awful depth
Of Truth's mysterious bosom, doth forsake
The unadorn'd condition of her birth;
And dress'd by Fancy in ten thousand hues,
Assumes a various feature, to attract,
With charms responsive to each gazer's eye,
The hearts of men. Amid his rural walk,
The ingenuous youth, whom solitude inspires
With purest wishes, from the pensive shade
Beholds her moving, like a virgin Muse
That wakes her lyre to some indulgent theme
Of harmony and wonder: while among
The herd of servile minds, her strenuous form
Indignant flashes on the patriot's eye,
And through the rolls of memory appeals

To ancient honour, or, in act serene,
Yet watchful, raises the majestic sword
Of public power, from dark ambition's reach
To guard the sacred volume of the laws.

Genius of ancient Greece! whose faithful steps
Well-pleas'd I follow through the sacred paths
Of Nature and of Science; nurse divine
Of all heroic deeds and fair desires!
Oh! let the breath of thy extended praise
Inspire my kindling bosom to the height
Of this untempted theme. Nor be my thoughts
Presumptuous counted, if amid the calm
That sooths this vernal evening into smiles,
I steal impatient from the sordid haunts
Of strife and low ambition, to attend
Thy sacred presence in the sylvan shade,
By their malignant footsteps ne'er profan'd.
Descend, propitious! to my favour'd eye;
Such in thy mein, thy warm, exalted air,

As when the Persian tyrant, foil'd and stung
With shame and desperation, gnash'd his teeth
To see thee rend the pageants of his throne;
And at the lightning of thy lifted spear
Crouch'd like a slave. Bring all thy martial spoils,
Thy palms, thy laurels, thy triumphal songs,
Thy smiling band of arts, thy god-like sires
Of civil wisdom, thy heroic youth
Warm from the schools of glory. Guide my way
Through fair Lycéum's walk, the green retreats
Of Academus, and the thymy vale,
Where oft enchanted with Socratic sounds,
Ilissus pure devolv'd his tuneful stream
In gentler murmurs. From the blooming store
Of these auspicious fields, may I unblam'd
Transplant some living blossoms to adorn
My native clime: while far above the flight
Of Fancy's plume aspiring, I unlock
The springs of ancient wisdom! while I join
Thy name, thrice honour'd! with the immortal praise

Of Nature, while to my compatriot youth
I point the high example of my sons,
And tune to attic themas the British lyre.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE

SECOND BOOK

OF THE

PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION.

ARGUMENT.

THE separation of the works of Imagination from philosophy, the cause of their abuse among the moderns.—Prospect of their re-union under the influence of public liberty.—Enumeration of accidental pleasures, which increase the effect of objects delightful to the imagination.—The pleasures of sense.—Particular circumstances of the mind.—Discovery of truth.—Perception of contrivance and design.—Emotion of the passions.—All the natural passions partake of a pleasing sensation; with the final cause of this constitution illustrated by an allegorical vision, and exemplified in sorrow, pity, terror, and indignation.

THE

PLEASURES

OF

IMAGINATION.

BOOK II.

WHEN shall the laurel and the vocal string
Resume their honours? When shall we behold
The tuneful tongue, the Promethéan hand,
Aspire to ancient praise? Alas! how faint,
How slow, the dawn of beauty and of truth
Breaks the reluctant shades of Gothic night
Which yet involve the nations! Long they groan'd
Beneath the furies of rapacious force;
Oft as the gloomy North, with iron-swarms
Tempestuous pouring from her frozen caves,

Blasted the Italian shore, and swept the works
Of liberty and wisdom down the gulph
Of all-devouring night. As long immur'd
In noon-tide darkness by the glimmering lamp,
Each Muse and each fair science pin'd away
The sordid hours: while foul, barbarian hands
Their mysteries profan'd, unstrung the lyre,
And chain'd the soaring pinion down to earth.
At last the Muses rose, and spurn'd their bonds,
And, wildly warbling, scatter'd, as they flew,
Their blooming wreaths from fair Valclusa's bowers
To Arno's myrtle border and the shore
Of soft Parthenope. But still the rage
Of dire ambition and gigantic power,
From public aims and from the busy walk
Of civil commerce, drove the bolder train
Of penetrating science to the cells,
Where studious ease consumes the silent hour
In shadowy searches and unfruitful care.
Thus from their guardians torn, the tender arts

Of mimic fancy and harmonious joy,
To priestly domination and the lust
Of lawless courts, their amiable toil
For three inglorious ages have resign'd,
In vain reluctant: and Torquato's tongue
Was tun'd for slavish pæans at the throne
Of tinsel pomp: and Raphael's magic hand
Effus'd its fair creation to enchant
The fond adoring herd in Latian fanes
To blind belief; while on their prostrate necks
The sable tyrant plants his heel secure.
But now, behold! the radiant æra dawns,
When freedom's ample fabric, fix'd at length
For endless years on Albion's happy shore
In full proportion, once more shall extend
To all the kindred powers of social bliss
A common mansion, a parental roof.
There shall the Virtues, there shall Wisdom's train,
Their long-lost friends rejoining, as of old,
Embrace the smiling family of Arts,

The Muses and the Graces. Then no more
Shall Vice, distracting their delicious gifts
To aims abhorr'd, with high distaste and scorn
Turn from their charms the philosophic eye,
The patriot-bosom; then no more the paths
Of public care or intellectual toil,
Alone by footsteps haughty and severe
In gloomy state be trod; the harmonious Muse
And her persuasive sisters then shall plant
Their sheltering laurels o'er the bleak ascent,
And scatter flowers along the rugged way.
Arm'd with the lyre, already have we dar'd
To pierce divine Philosophy's retreats,
And teach the Muse her lore; already strove
Their long-divided honours to unite,
While tempering this deep argument we sang
Of Truth and Beauty. Now the same glad task
Impends; now urging our ambitious toil,
We hasten to recount the various springs
Of adventitious pleasure, which adjoin

Their grateful influence to the prime effect
Of objects grand or beauteous, and enlarge
The complicated joy. The sweets of sense,
Do they not oft with kind accession flow,
To raise harmonious Fancy's native charm?
So while we taste the fragrance of the rose,
Glows not her blush the fairer? While we view
Amid the noon-tide walk a limpid rill
Gush thro' the trickling herbage, to the thirst
Of summer yielding the delicious draught
Of cool refreshment; o'er the mossy brink
Shines not the surface clearer, and the waves
With sweeter music murmur as they flow?

Nor this alone; the various lot of life
Oft from external circumstance assumes
A moment's disposition to rejoice
In those delights which at a different hour
Would pass unheeded. Fair the face of spring,
When rural songs and odours wake the morn,

To every eye: but how much more to his
Round whom the bed of sickness long diffus'd
Its melancholy gloom! how doubly fair,
When first with fresh-born vigour he inhales
The balmy breeze, and feels the blessed sun
Warm at his bosom, from the springs of life
Chasing oppressive damps and languid pain!

Or shall I mention, where cœlestial Truth
Her awful light discloses, to bestow
A more majestic pomp on Beauty's frame?
For man loves knowledge, and the beams of Truth
More welcome touch his understanding's eye,
Than all the blandishments of sound his ear,
Than all of taste his tongue. Nor ever yet
The melting rainbow's vernal-tinctur'd hues
To me have shone so pleasing, as when first
The hand of Science pointed out the path
In which the sun-beams gleaming from the West
Fall on the watery cloud, whose darksome veil

Involves the orient; and that trickling shower
Piercing thro' every crystalline convex
Of clustering dew-drops to their flight oppos'd,
Recoil at length where concave are behind
The internal surface of each glassy orb
Repels their forward passage into air;
That thence direct they seek the radiant goal
From which their course began; and as they strike
In different lines the gazer's obvious eye,
Assume a different lustre, tho' the braid
Of colours changing from the splendid rose
To the pale violet's dejected hue.

Or shall we touch that kind access of joy,
That springs to each fair object, while we trace
Thro' all its fabric, Wisdom's artful aim
Disposing every part, and gaining still
By means proportion'd her benignant end?
Speak, ye, the pure delight, whose favour'd steps
The lamp of science thro' the jealous maze

Of Nature guides, when haply you reveal
Her secret honours: whether in the sky,
The beauteous laws of light, the central powers
That wheel the pensile planets round the year;
Whether in wonders of the rolling deep,
Or the rich fruits of all-sustaining earth,
Or fine-adjusted springs of life and sense,
Ye scan the counsels of their Author's hand.

What, when to raise the meditated scene,
The flame of passion, thro' the struggling soul
Deep-kindled shows across that sudden blaze
The object of its rapture, vast of size,
With fiercer colours and a night of shade?
What? like a storm from their capacious bed
The sounding seas o'erwhelming, when the might
Of these eruptions, working from the depth
Of man's strong apprehension, shakes his frame
Even to the base; from every naked sense
Of pain or pleasure dissipating all

Opinion's feeble coverings, and the veil
Spun from the cobweb fashion of the times
To hide the feeling heart? Then Nature speaks
Her genuine language and the words of men,
Big with the very motion of their souls,
Declare with what accumulated force,
The impetuous nerve of passion urges on
The native weight and energy of things.

Yet more: her honours where nor beauty claims,
Nor shows of good the thirsty sense allure,
From passion's power alone our nature holds
Essential pleasure. Passion's fierce illapse
Rouses the mind's own fabric; with supplies
Of daily impulse keeps the elastic powers
Intensely poiz'd, and polishes anew
By that collision all the fine machine:
Else rust would rise, and foulness, by degrees
Incumbering, choke at last, what Heaven design'd
For ceaseless motion and a round of toil.

—But say, does every passion thus to man
Administer delight? That name indeed
Becomes the rosy breath of love; becomes
The radiant smiles of joy, the applauding hand
Of admiration: but the bitter shower
That sorrow sheds upon a brother's grave,
But the dumb palsy of nocturnal fear,
Or those consuming fires that gnaw the heart
Of panting indignation, find we there
To move delight?—Then listen while my tongue
The unalter'd will of Heaven with faithful awe
Reveals; what old Harmodius wont to teach
My early age; Harmodius, who had weigh'd
Within his learned mind whate'er the schools
Of Wisdom, or thy lonely-whispering voice,
O faithful Nature! dictate of the laws
Which govern and support this mighty frame
Of universal being. Oft the hours
From morn to eve have stolen unmark'd away,
While mute attention hung upon his lips,
As thus the sage his awful tale began:

'Twas in the windings of an ancient wood,
When spotless youth with solitude resigns
To sweet philosophy the studious day,
What time pale Autumn shades the silent eve,
Musing I rov'd. Of good and evil much,
And much of mortal man my thought revolv'd;
When starting full on Fancy's gushing eye
The mournful image of Parthenia's fate,
That hour, O long belov'd, and long deplor'd!
When blooming youth, nor gentlest Wisdom's arts,
Nor Hymen's honours gather'd for thy brow,
Nor all thy lover's, all thy father's tears
Avail'd to snatch thee from the cruel grave;
Thy agonizing looks, thy last farewell
Struck to the inmost feeling of my soul
As with the hand of Death. At once the shade
More horrid nodded o'er me, and the winds
With hoarser murmuring shook the branches. Dark
As midnight storms, the scene of human things
Appear'd before me; deserts, burning sands,

Where the parch'd adder dies ; the frozen South,
And desolation blasting all the West
With rapine and with murder: tyrant power
Here sits enthron'd with blood ; the baleful charms
Of Superstition there infect the skies,
And turn the sun to horror. Gracious Heaven!
What is the life of man? Or cannot these,
Not these portents thy awful will suffice?
That, propagated thus beyond their scope,
They rise to act their cruelties anew
In my afflicted bosom, thus decreed
The universal sensitive pain.
The wretched heirs of evils not his own!

Thus I impatient; when at once effus'd,
A flashing torrent of cœlestial day
Burst thro' the shadowy void. With slow descent
A purple cloud came floating thro' the sky,
And pois'd at length within the circling trees,
Hung obvious to my view ; till opening wide

Its lucid orb, a more than human form
Emerging lean'd majestic o'er my head,
And instant thunder shook the conscious grove.
Then melted into air the liquid cloud,
Then all the shining vision stood reveal'd.
A wreath of palm his ample forehead bound,
And o'er his shoulder, mantling to his knee,
Flow'd the transparent robe, around his waist
Collected with a radiant zone of gold
Ætherial: there in mystic signs engrav'd.
I read his office high and sacred name
Genius of human kind. Appall'd I gaz'd
The godlike presence; for athwart his brow
Displeasure, temper'd with a mild concern,
Look'd down reluctant on me, and his words
Like distant thunders broke the murmuring air.

Vain are thy thoughts, O child of mortal birth!
And impotent thy tongue. Is thy short span
Capacious of this universal frame?

Thy wisdom all-sufficient? Thou, alas!
Dost thou aspire to judge between the Lord
Of Nature and his works? to lift thy voice
Against the sovereign order he decreed,
All good and lovely? to blaspheme the bands
Of tenderness innate and social love,
Holiest of things! by which the general orb
Of being as by adamantine links,
Was drawn to perfect union and sustain'd
From everlasting? Hast thou felt the pangs
Of softening sorrow, of indignant zeal
So grievous to the soul, as thence to wish
The ties of Nature broken from thy frame;
That so thy selfish, unrelenting heart
Might cease to mourn its lot, no longer then
The wretched heir of evils not its own?
O fair benevolence of generous minds!
O man by Nature form'd for all mankind!

He spoke; abash'd and silent I remain'd,
As conscious of my tongue's offence, and aw'd

Before his presence, tho' my secret soul
Disdain'd the imputation. On the ground
I fix'd my eyes; till from his airy couch
He stoop'd sublime, and touching with his hand
My dazzling forehead, Raise thy sight, he cried,
And let thy sense convince thy erring tongue.

I look'd, and lo! the former scene was chang'd;
For verdant alleys and surrounding trees,
A solitary prospect, wide and wild,
Rush'd on my senses. 'Twas an horrid pile
Of hills with many a shaggy forest mix'd,
With many a sable cliff and glittering stream.
Aloft recumbent o'er the hanging ridge,
The brown woods wav'd; while ever trickling springs
Wash'd from the naked roots of oats and pine
The crumbling soil; and still at every fall
Down the steep windings of the channell'd rock,
Remurmuring rush'd the congregated floods
With hoarser inundation; till at last

They reach'd a grassy plain, which from the skirts
Of that high desert spread her verdant lap,
And drank the gushing moisture, where confin'd
In one smooth current, o'er the lilied vale
Clearer than glass it flow'd. Autumnal spoils
Luxuriant spreading to the rays of morn,
Blush'd o'er the cliffs, whose half-encircling mound
As in a sylvan theatre enclos'd
That flowery level. On the river's brink
I spy'd a fair pavilion, which diffus'd
Its floating umbrage 'mid the silver shade
Of osiers. Now the western sun reveal'd
Between two parting cliffs his golden orb,
And pour'd across the shadow of the hills,
On rocks and floods, a yellow stream of light
That cheer'd the solemn scene. My listening powers
Were aw'd, and every thought in silence hung,
And wondering expectation. Then the voice
Of that celestial power, the mystic show
Declaring, thus my deep attention call'd.

Inhabitant of earth, to whom is given
The gracious ways of Providence to learn,
Receive my sayings with a stedfast ear—
Know then, the sov'reign spirit of the world,
Though, self-collected from eternal time,
Within his own deep essence he beheld
The bounds of true felicity complete;
Yet by immense benignity inclin'd
To spread around him that primæval joy
Which fill'd himself, he rais'd his plastic arm
And sounded through the hollow depth of space
The strong, creative mandate. Straight arose
These heavenly orbs, the glad abodes of life
Effusive kindled by his breath divine
Through endless forms of being. Each inhal'd
From him its portion of the vital flame,
In measure such, that, from the wide complex
Of co-existent orders, one might rise,
One order, all-involving and entire.
He too beholding in the sacred light

Of his essential reason, all the shapes
Of swift contingence, all successive ties
Of action propagated through the sum
Of possible existence, he at once,
Down the long series of eventful time
So fix'd the dates of being, so dispos'd,
To every living soul of every kind
The field of motion and the hour of rest,
That all conspir'd to his supreme design,
To universal good: with full accord
Answering the mighty model he had chosen,
The best and fairest of unnumber'd worlds
That lay from everlasting in the store
Of his divine conceptions. Nor content,
By one exertion of creative power
His goodness to reveal; through every age,
Through every moment up the tract of time
His parent-hand with ever-new increase
Of happiness and virtue has adorn'd
The vast harmonious frame: his parent-hand,

From the mute shell-fish gasping on the shore,
To men, to angels, to cœlestial minds,
For ever leads the generations on
To higher scenes of being; while supply'd
From day to day with his enlivening breath,
Inferior orders in succession rise
To fill the void below. As flame ascends,
As bodies to their proper centre move,
As the pois'd ocean to the attracting moon
Obedient swells, and every headlong stream
Devolves its winding waters to the main;
So all things which have life aspire to God,
The sun of being, boundless, unimpair'd,
Centre of souls! Nor does the faithful voice
Of Nature cease to prompt their eager steps
Aright: nor is the care of Heaven withheld
From granting to the task proportion'd aid;
That in their stations all may persevere
To climb the ascent of being, and approach
For ever nearer to the life divine.

That rocky pile thou seest, that verdant lawn
Fresh-water'd from the mountains. Let the scene
Paint in thy fancy the primæval seat
Of man, and where the will supreme ordain'd
His mansion, that pavilion fair diffus'd
Along the shady brink! in this recess
To wear the appointed season of his youth,
Till riper hours should open to his toil
The high communion of superior minds,
Of consecrated Heroes and of Gods.
Nor did the Sire Omnipotent forget
His tender bloom to cherish; nor withheld
Cœlestial footsteps from his green abode.
Oft from the radiant honours of his throne,
He sent whom most he lov'd the sov'reign fair,
The effluence of his glory, whom he plac'd
Before his eyes for ever to behold;
The goddess from whose inspiration flows
The toil of patriots, the delight of friends;
Without whose work divine, in heaven or earth,

Nought lovely, nought propitious comes to pass,
Nor hopes, nor praise, nor honour. Her the Sire
Gave it in charge to rear the blooming mind,
The folded powers to open, to direct
The growth luxuriant of his young desires,
And from the laws of this majestic world
To teach him what was good. As thus the nymph
Her daily care attended, by her side
With constant steps her gay companion stay'd,
The fair Euphrosyné, the gentle queen
Of smiles, and graceful gladness, and delights
That cheer alike the hearts of mortal men
And powers immortal. See the shining pair!
Behold, where from his dwelling now disclos'd
They quit their youthful charge and seek the skies.

I look'd, and on the flowery turf there stood
Between two radiant forms a smiling youth
Whose tender cheeks display'd the vernal flower
Of beauty; sweetest innocence illum'd

His bashful eyes, and on his polish'd brow
Sat young simplicity. With fond regard
He viewed the associates, as their steps they mov'd;
The younger chief his ardent eyes detain'd
With mild regret invoking her return.
Bright as the star of evening she appear'd
Amid the dusky scene. Eternal youth
O'er all her form its glowing honours breath'd;
And smiles eternal from her candid eyes
Flow'd like the dewy lustre of the morn
Effusive trembling on the placid waves.
The spring of heaven had shed its blushing spoils
To bind her sable tresses: full diffus'd
Her yellow mantle floated in the breeze;
And in her hand she wav'd a living branch
Rich with immortal fruits, of power to calm
The wrathful heart, and from the brightening eyes
To chase the cloud of sadness. More sublime
The heavenly partner mov'd. The prime of age
Compos'd her steps. The presence of a god,

High on the circle of her brow enthron'd,
From each majestic motion darted awe,
Devoted awe! till, cherish'd by her looks
Benevolent and meek, confiding love
To filial rapture soften'd all the soul.
Free in her graceful hand she pois'd the sword
Of chaste dominion. An heroic crown
Display'd the whole simplicity of pomp
Around her honour'd head. A matron's robe
White as the sunshine streams through vernal clouds
Her stately form invested. Hand in hand
The immortal pair forsook the enamell'd green,
Ascending slowly. Rays of limpid light
Gleam'd round their path; cœlestial sounds were heard,
And through the fragrant air ætherial dews
Distill'd around them; till at once the clouds
Disparting wide in midway sky, withdrew
Their airy veil, and left a bright expanse
Of empyréan flame, where spent and drown'd,
Afflicted vision plung'd in vain to scan

What object it involv'd. My feeble eyes
Endur'd not. Bending down to earth I stood,
With dumb attention. Soon a female voice,
As watery murmurs sweet, or warbling shades,
With sacred invocation thus began:

Father of gods and mortals! whose right arm
With reins eternal guides the moving heavens,
Bend thy propitious ear. Behold well-pleas'd
I seek to finish thy divine decree.
With frequent steps I visit yonder seat
Of man; thy offspring; from the tender seeds
Of justice and of wisdom to evolve
The latent honours of his generous frame;
Till thy conducting hand shall raise his lot
From earth's dim scene to those ætherial walks,
The temple of thy glory. But not me
Not my directing voice he oft requires,
Or hears delighted: this enchanting maid,
The associate thou hast given me, her alone

He loves, O Father! absent, her he craves;
And but for her glad presence ever join'd,
Rejoices not in mine: that all my hopes
This my benignant purpose to fulfil,
I deem uncertain: and my daily cares
Unfruitful all and vain, unless by Thee
Still farther aided in the work divine.

She ceas'd; a voice more awful thus replied:
O thou! in whom for ever I delight,
Fairer than all the inhabitants of heaven,
Best image of thy author! far from thee
Be disappointment, or distaste, or blame;
Who soon or late shall every work fulfil,
And no resistance find. If man refuse
To hearken to thy dictates; or allur'd
By meaner joys, to any other power
Transfer the honours due to thee alone;
That joy which he pursues he ne'er shall taste,
That power in whom delighteth ne'er behold.

Go then! once more, and happy be thy toil;
Go then! but let not this thy smiling friend
Partake thy footsteps. In her stead, behold!
With thee the son of Nemesis I send;
The fiend abhorr'd! whose vengeance takes account
Of sacred order's violated laws.
See where he calls thee, burning to be gone,
Fierce to exhaust the tempest of his wrath
On yon devoted head. But thou, my child,
Control his cruel frenzy, and protect
Thy tender charge, that when despair shall grasp
His agonizing bosom, he may learn,
Then he may learn to love the gracious hand
Alone sufficient in the hour of ill,
To save his feeble spirit; then confess
Thy genuine honours, O excelling fair!
When all the plagues that wait the deadly will
Of this avenging dæmon, all the storms
Of night infernal, serve but to display
The energy of thy superior charms

With mildest awe triumphant o'er his rage,
And shining clearer in the horrid gloom.

Here ceas'd that awful voice, and soon I felt
The cloudy curtain of refreshing eve
Was clos'd once more, from that immortal fire
Sheltering my eyelids. Looking up, I view'd
A vast gigantic spectre striding on
Thro' murmuring thunders and a waste of clouds,
With dreadful action. Black as night his brow
Relentless frowns involv'd. His savage limbs
With sharp impatience violent he writh'd,
As through convulsive anguish; and his hand,
Arm'd with a scorpion-lash, full oft he rais'd
In madness to his bosom; while his eyes
Rain'd bitter tears, and bellowing loud he shook
The void with horror. Silent by his side
The virgin came. No discomposure stirr'd
Her features. From the glooms which hung around
No stain of darkness mingled with the beam

Of her divine effulgence. Now they stoop
Upon the river-bank; and now to hail
His wonted guests, with eager steps advanc'd
The unsuspecting inmate of the shade.

As when a famish'd wolf, that all night long
Had rang'd the Alpine snows, by chance at morn
Sees from a cliff incumbent o'er the smoke
Of some lone village, a neglected kid
That strays along the wild for herb or spring;
Down from the winding ridge he sweeps amain,
And thinks he tears him: so with tenfold rage,
The monster sprung remorseless on his prey.
Amaz'd the stripling stood: with panting breast
Feebly he pour'd the lamentable wail
Of helpless consternation, struck at once,
And rooted to the ground. The queen beheld
His terror, and with looks of tenderest care
Advanc'd to save him. Soon the tyrant felt
Her awful power. His keen, tempestuous arm

Hung nerveless, nor descended where his rage
Had aim'd the deadly blow: then dumb retir'd
With sullen rancour. Lo! the sov'reign maid
Folds with a mother's arms the fainting boy,
Till life rekindles in his rosy cheek;
Then grasps his hands, and cheers him with her tongue.

Oh wake thee, rouze thy spirit! Shall the spite
Of yon tormentor thus appal thy heart,
While I, thy friend and guardian, am at hand
To rescue and to heal? Oh let thy soul
Remember what the will of heaven ordains
Is ever good for all; and if for all,
Then good for thee. Nor only by the warmth
And soothing sunshine of delightful things,
Do minds grow up and flourish. Oft misled
By that bland light, the young unpractis'd views
Of reason wander through a fatal road,
Far from their native aim: as if to lie
Inglorious in the fragrant shade, and wait

The soft access of ever circling joys,
Were all the end of being. Ask thyself,
This pleasing error did it never lull
Thy wishes? Has thy constant heart refus'd
The silken fetters of delicious ease?
Or when divine Euphrosyné appear'd
Within this dwelling, did not thy desires
Hang far below the measure of thy fate,
Which I reveal'd before thee? and thy eyes,
Impatient of my counsels, turn away
To drink the soft effusion of her smiles?
Know then, for this the everlasting Sire
Deprives thee of her presence, and instead,
O wise and still benevolent! ordains
This horrid visage hither to pursue
Thy steps; that so thy nature may discern
Its real good, and what alone can save
Thy feeble spirit in this hour of ill
From folly and despair. O yet belov'd!
Let not this headlong terror quite o'erwhelm

Thy scatter'd powers ; nor fatal deem the rage
Of this tormentor, nor his proud assault,
While I am here to vindicate thy toil,
Above the generous question of thy arm.
Brave by thy fears, and in thy weakness strong
This hour he triumphs : but confront his might,
And dare him to the combat, then with ease
Disarm'd and quell'd, his fierceness he resigns
To bondage and to scorn : while thus enur'd
By watchful danger, by unceasing toil,
The immortal mind, superior to his fate,
Amid the outrage of external things,
Firm as the solid base of this great world,
Rests on his own foundations. Blow, ye winds!
Ye waves! ye thunders! roll your tempest on;
Shake, ye old pillars of the marble sky!
Till all its orbs and all its worlds of fire
Be loosen'd from their seats ; yet still serene,
The unconquer'd mind looks down upon the wreck;
And ever stronger as the storms advance,

Firm through the closing ruin holds his way,
Where Nature calls him to the destin'd goal.

So spake the goddess; while through all her frame
Cœlestial raptures flow'd, in every word,
In every motion kindling warmth divine
To seize who listen'd. Vehement and swift
As lightning fires the aromatic shade
In Æthiopian fields, the stripling felt
Her inspiration catch his fervid soul,
And starting from his languor thus exclaim'd:

Then let the trial come! and witness thou,
If terror be upon me; if I shrink
To meet the storm, or faulter in my strength
When hardest it besets me. Do not think
That I am fearful and infirm of soul,
As late thy eyes beheld: for thou hast chang'd
My nature; thy commanding voice has wak'd
My languid powers to bear me boldly on,

Where'er the will divine my path ordains
Through toil or peril: only do not thou
Forsake me; Oh be thou for ever near,
That I may listen to thy sacred voice,
And guide by thy decrees my constant feet.
But say, for ever are my eyes bereft?
Say, shall the fair Euphrosyné not once
Appear again to charm me? Thou, in heaven!
O thou eternal Arbiter of things!
Be thy great bidding done: for who am I,
To question thy appointment? Let the frowns
Of this avenger every morn o'ercast
The cheerful dawn, and every evening damp
With double night my dwelling; I will learn
To hail them both, and unrepining bear
His hateful presence; but permit my tongue
One glad request, and if my deeds may find
Thy awful eye propitious, oh restore
The rosy-featur'd maid; again to cheer
This lonely seat, and bless me with her smiles.

He spoke; when instant thro' the sable glooms
With which that furious presence had involv'd
The ambient air, a flood of radiance came
Swift as the lightning flash; the melting clouds
Flew diverse, and amid the blue serene
Euphrosyné appear'd. With sprightly step
The nymph alighted on the irriguous lawn,
And to her wondering audience thus began:

Lo! I am here to answer to your vows,
And be the meeting fortunate! I come
With joyful tidings; we shall part no more—
Hark! how the gentle Echo from her cell
Talks thro' the cliffs, and murmuring o'er the stream
Repeats the accents, We shall part no more.
O my delightful friends! well pleas'd on high
The Father has beheld you, while the might
Of that stern foe with bitter trial prov'd
Your equal doings; then for ever spake
The high decree: That thou, celestial maid!

Howe'er that grisly phantom on thy steps
May sometimes dare intrude, yet never more
Shalt thou, descending to the abode of man,
Alone endure the rancour of his arm,
Or leave thy lov'd Euphrosyné behind.

She ended: and the whole romantic scene
Immediate vanish'd; rocks, and woods, and rills,
The mantling tent, and each mysterious form,
Flew like the pictures of a morning dream,
When sun-shine fills the bed. Awhile I stood
Perplex'd and giddy; till the radiant power
Who bade the visionary landscape rise,
As up to him I turn'd, with gentlest looks
Preventing my inquiry, thus began:

There let thy soul acknowledge its complaint
How blind, how impious! There behold the ways
Of Heaven's eternal destiny to man,
For ever just, benevolent, and wise:

That Virtue's awful steps, howe'er pursued
By vexing Fortune and intrusive Pain,
Should never be divided from her chaste,
Her fair attendant, Pleasure. Need I urge
Thy tardy thought thro' all the various round
Of this existence, that thy softening soul
At length may learn what energy the hand
Of Virtue mingles in the bitter tide
Of Passion swelling with Distress and Pain,
To mitigate the sharp with gracious drops
Of cordial Pleasure? Ask the faithful youth,
Why the cold urn of her whom long he lov'd
So often fills his arms; so often draws
His lonely footsteps at the silent hour,
To pay the mournful tribute of his tears?
Oh! he will tell thee, that the wealth of worlds
Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forego
That sacred hour, when, stealing from the noise
Of care and envy, sweet remembrance sooths
With Virtue's kindest looks his aching breast,

T. Stothard del.ᵉ J. Parker sculpᵗ

Euphrosyne appeard. With sprightly Step
The Nymph alighted.

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And turns his tears to rapture.—Ask the crowd
Which flies impatient from the village walk
To climb the neighbouring cliffs, when far below
The cruel winds have hurl'd upon the coast
Some helpless bark; while sacred Pity melts
The general eye, or Terror's icy hand
Smites their distorted limbs and horrent hair;
While every mother closer to her breast
Catches her child, and pointing where the waves
Foam thro' the shatter'd vessel, shrieks aloud,
As one poor wretch that spreads his piteous arms
For succour, swallow'd by the roaring surge,
As now another, dash'd against the rock,
Drops lifeless down: Oh! deemest thou indeed
No kind endearment here by Nature given
To mutual Terror and Compassion's tears?
No sweetly-melting softness which attracts,
O'er all that edge of pain, the social powers
To this their proper action and their end?
—Ask thy own heart; when at the midnight hour

Slow thro' that studious gloom thy pausing eye
Led by the glimmering taper moves around
The sacred volumes of the dead, the songs
Of Grecian bards, and records writ by Fame
For Grecian heroes, where the present Power
Of heaven and earth surveys the immortal page,
Even as a father blessing, while he reads
The praises of his son. If then thy soul,
Spurning the yoke of these inglorious days,
Mix in their deeds, and kindle with their flame;
Say, when the prospect blackens on thy view,
When rooted from the base, heroic states
Mourn in the dust, and tremble at the frown
Of curs'd ambition; when the pious band
Of youths who fought for freedom and their sires,
Lie side by side in gore; when ruffian pride
Usurps the throne of justice, turns the pomp
Of public power, the majesty of rule,
The sword, the laurel, and the purple robe,
To slavish empty pageants, to adorn

A tyrant's walk, and glitter in the eyes
Of such as bow the knee ; when honour'd urns
Of patriots and of chiefs, the awful bust
And storied arch, to glut the coward-rage
Of regal envy, strew the public way
With hallow'd ruins ; when the Muse's haunt,
The marble porch where Wisdom wont to talk
With Socrates or Tully, hears no more,
Save the hoarse jargon of contentious monks,
Or female Superstition's midnight prayer ;
When ruthless Rapine from the hand of Time
Tears the destroying scythe, with surer blow
To sweep the works of glory from their base ;
Till Desolation o'er the grass-grown street
Expands his raven-wings, and up the wall,
Where senates once the price of monarchs doom'd,
Hisses the gliding snake thro' hoary weeds
That clasp the mouldering column ; thus defac'd,
Thus widely mournful when the prospect thrills
Thy beating bosom, when the patriot's tear

Starts from thine eye, and thy extended arm
In fancy hurls the thunderbolt of Jove
To fire the impious wreath on Philip's brow,
Or dash Octavius from the trophied car;
Say, does thy secret soul repine to taste
The big distress? Or wouldst thou then exchange
Those heart-ennobling sorrows for the lot
Of him who sits amid the gaudy herd
Of mute barbarians bending to his nod,
And bears aloft his gold-invested front,
And says within himself, "I am a king,
"And wherefore should the clamorous voice of woe
"Intrude upon mine ear?—" The baleful dregs
Of these late ages, this inglorious draught
Of servitude and folly, have not yet,
Blest be the eternal Ruler of the World!
Defil'd to such a depth of sordid shame
The native honours of the human soul,
Nor so effac'd the image of its Sire.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

THE

THIRD BOOK

OF THE

PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION.

ARGUMENT.

THE pleasure of observing the tempers and manners of men, even where vicious or absurd.—The origin of vice, from false representations of the fancy, producing false opinions concerning good and evil.—Inquiry into ridicule.—The general sources of ridicule in the minds and characters of men enumerated.—Final cause of the sense of ridicule.—The resemblance of certain aspects of inanimate things to the sensations and properties of the mind. The operations of the mind in the production of the works of the imagination, described.—The secondary pleasure from imitation.—The benevolent order of the world illustrated in the arbitrary connection of these pleasures with the objects which exite them.—The nature and conduct of taste.—Concluding with an account of the natural and moral advantages resulting from a sensible and well-formed imagination.

THE

PLEASURES

OF

IMAGINATION.

BOOK III.

WHAT wonder therefore, since the endearing ties
Of passion link the universal kind
Of man so close, what wonder if to search
This common Nature thro' the various change
Of sex, and age, and fortune, and the frame
Of each peculiar, draw the busy mind
With unresisted charms: The spacious West,
And all the teeming regions of the South
Hold not a quarry, to the curious flight
Of knowledge, half so tempting or so fair,

As man to man. Nor only where the smiles
Of love invite; nor only where the applause
Of cordial honour turns the attentive eye
On Virtue's graceful deeds. For since the course
Of things external acts in different ways
On human apprehensions, as the hand
Of Nature temper'd to a different frame
Peculiar minds; so haply where the powers
Of Fancy neither lessen nor enlarge
The images of things, but paint in all
Their genuine hues, the features which they wore
In Nature; there Opinion will be true,
And Action right. For Action treads the path
In which Opinion says he follows good,
Or flies from evil; and Opinion gives
Report of good or evil, as the scene
Was drawn by Fancy, lovely or deform'd:
Thus her report can never there be true
Where Fancy cheats the intellectual eye
With glaring colours and distorted lines.

Is there a man who at the sound of death
Sees ghastly shapes of Terror conjur'd up,
And black before him ; nought but death-bed groans
And fearful prayers, and plunging from the brink
Of light and being, down the gloomy air
An unknown depth ? Alas ! in such a mind
If no bright forms of excellence attend
The image of his country ; nor the pomp
Of sacred senates, nor the guardian voice
Of Justice on her throne, nor aught that wakes
The conscious bosom with a patriot's flame ;
Will not Opinion tell him, that to die,
Or stand the hazard, is a greater ill
Than to betray his country ? And in act
Will he not choose to be a wretch, and live ?
Here Vice begins then. From the enchanting cup
Which Fancy holds to all, the unwary thirst
Of youth oft swallows a Circéan draught,
That sheds a baneful tincture o'er the eye
Of Reason, till no longer he discerns,

And only guides to err. Then revel forth
A furious band that spurn him from the throne!
And all is uproar. Thus Ambition grasps
The empire of the soul: thus pale Revenge
Unsheaths her murderous dagger; and the hands
Of Lust and Rapine, with unholy arts,
Watch to o'erturn the barrier of the laws
That keeps them from their prey: thus all the plagues
The wicked bear, or o'er the trembling scene
The Tragic Muse discloses, under shapes
Of honour, safety, pleasure, ease, or pomp,
Stole first into the mind. Yet not by all
Those lying forms which Fancy in the brain
Engenders, are the kindling passions driven
To guilty deeds; nor Reason bound in chains,
That Vice alone may lord it: oft adorn'd
With solemn pageants, Folly mounts the throne,
And plays her idiot antics, like a queen.
A thousand garbs she wears; a thousand ways
She wheels her giddy empire.—Lo! thus far

With bold adventure, to the Mantuan lyre
I sing of Nature's charms, and touch well-pleas'd
A stricter note: now haply must my song
Unbend her serious measure, and reveal
In lighter strains, how Folly's awkward arts
Excite impetuous Laughter's gay rebuke;
The sportive province of the Comic Muse.

See! in what crowds the uncouth forms advance:
Each would outstrip the other, each prevent
Our careful search, and offer to your gaze,
Unask'd, his motley features. Wait awhile,
My curious friends! and let us first arrange
In proper order your promiscuous throng.

Behold the foremost band; of slender thought,
And easy faith; whom flattering Fancy sooths
With lying spectres, in themselves to view
Illustrious forms of excellence and good,
That scorn the mansion. With exulting hearts

They spread their spurious treasures to the sun,
And bid the world admire! but chief the glance
Of wilful Envy draws their joy-bright eyes,
And lifts with self-applause each lordly brow.
In numbers boundless as the blooms of spring.
Behold their glaring idols, empty shades
By Fancy gilded o'er, and then set up
For adoration. Some in Learning's garb,
With formal band, and sable-cinctur'd gown,
And rags of mouldy volumes. Some elate
With martial splendor, steely pikes and swords
Of costly frame, and gay Phœnician robes
Inwrought with flowery gold, assume the port
Of stately Valour: listening by his side
There stands a female form; to her, with looks
Of earnest import, pregnant with amaze,
He talks of deadly deeds, of breaches, storms,
And sulphurous mines, and ambush: then at once
Breaks off, and smiles to see her look so pale,
And asks some wondering question of her fears.

T. Stothard pinxt. J. Heath Sculpt.

assume the Port
Of stately Valour: listening by his Side
There stands a female Form;

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Others of graver mien; behold, adorn'd
With holy ensigns, how sublime they move,
And bending oft their sanctimonious eyes
Take homage of the simple-minded throng;
Ambassadors of heaven! Nor much unlike
Is he whose visage, in the lazy mist
That mantles every feature, hides a brood
Of politic conceits; of whispers, nods,
And hints deep omen'd with unwieldly schemes,
And dark portents of state, ten thousand more
Prodigious habits and tumultuous tongues,
Pour dauntless in, and swell the boastful band.

Then comes the second order; all who seek
The debt of praise, where watchful unbelief
Darts through the thin pretence her squinting eye
On some retir'd appearance which belies
The boasted virtue, or annuls the applause
That justice else would pay. Here side by side
I see two leaders of the solemn train

Approaching: one a female old and grey,
With eyes demure, and wrinkle furrow'd brow,
Pale as the cheeks of death; yet still she stuns
The sickening audience with a nauseous tale,
How many youths her myrtle-chains have worn,
How many virgins at her triumphs pin'd!
Yet how resolv'd she guards her cautious heart;
Such is her terror at the risques of love,
And man's seducing tongue! The other seems
A bearded sage, ungentle in his mien,
And sordid all his habit; peevish want
Grins at his heels, while down the gazing throng
He stalks, resounding in magnific phrase
The vanity of riches, the contempt
Of pomp and power. Be prudent in your zeal,
Ye grave associates! let the silent grace
Of her who blushes at the fond regard
Her charms inspire, more eloquent unfold
The praise of spotless honour: let the man
Whose eye regards not his illustrious pomp

And ample store, but as indulgent streams
To cheer the barren soil and spread the fruits
Of joy, let him by juster measures fix
The price of riches and the end of power.

Another tribe succeeds; deluded long
By Fancy's dazzling optics, these behold
The images of some peculiar things
With brighter hues resplendent, and pourtray'd
With features nobler far than e'er adorn'd
Their genuine objects. Hence the fever'd heart
Pants with delirious hope for tinsel charms;
Hence oft obtrusive on the eye of scorn,
Untimely zeal her witless pride betrays!
And serious manhood from the towering aim
Of Wisdom, stoops to emulate the boast
Of childish toil. Behold yon mystic form,
Bedeck'd with feathers, insects, weeds, and shells!
Not with intenser view the Samian sage
Bent his fix'd eye on heaven's intenser fires,

When first the order of that radiant scene
Swell'd his exulting thought, than this surveys
A muckworm's entrails or a spider's fang.
Next him a youth, with flowers and myrtles crown'd,
Attends that virgin form, and blushing kneels,
With fondest gesture and a suppliant's tongue,
To win her coy regard: adieu, for him,
The dull engagements of the bustling world!
Adieu the sick impertinence of praise!
And hope and action! for with her alone,
By streams and shades, to steal these sighing hours,
Is all he asks, and all that fate can give!
Thee too, facetious Momion, wandering here,
Thee, dreaded censor, oft have I beheld
Bewilder'd unawares: alas! too long
Flush'd with thy comic triumphs and the spoils
Of sly derision! till on every side
Hurling thy random bolts, offended truth
Assign'd thee here thy station with the slaves
Of folly. Thy once formidable name

Shall grace her humble records, and be heard
In scoffs and mockery bandied from the lips
Of all the vengeful brotherhood around,
So oft the patient victims of thy scorn.

But now, ye gay! to whom indulgent fate,
Of all the Muses' empire hath assign'd
The fields of folly, hither each advance
Your sickles; here the teeming soil affords
Its richest growth. A favourite brood appears;
In whom the dæmon, with a mother's joy,
Views all her charms reflected, all her cares
At full repaid. Ye most illustrious band!
Who, scorning reason's tame, pedantic rules,
And order's vulgar bondage, never meant
For souls sublime as yours, with generous zeal
Pay Vice the reverence Virtue long usurp'd,
And yield Deformity the fond applause
Which Beauty wont to claim; forgive my song,
That for the blushing diffidence of youth,
It shuns the unequal province of your praise.

Thus far triumphant in the pleasing guile
Of bland imagination, folly's train
Have dar'd our search: but now a dastard-kind
Advance reluctant, and with faultering feet
Shrink from the gazer's eye: enfeebled hearts
Whom Fancy chills with visionary fears,
Or bends to servile tameness with conceits,
Of shame, of evil, or of base defect,
Fantastic and delusive. Here the slave
Who drops abash'd when sullen pomp surveys
His humbler habit; here the trembling wretch
Unnerv'd and struck with terror's icy bolts,
Spent in weak wailings, drown'd in shameful tears,
At every dream of danger; here subdu'd
By frontless laughter and the hardy scorn
Of old, unfeeling vice, the abject soul,
Who blushing half resigns the candid praise
Of temperance and honour; half disowns
A freeman's hatred of tyrannic pride;
And hears with sickly smiles the venal mouth
With foulest licence mock the patriot's name.

Last of the motley bands on whom the power
Of gay derision bends her hostile aim,
Is that where shameful ignorance presides.
Beneath her sordid banners, lo! they march,
Like blind and lame. Whate'er their doubtful hands
Attempt, confusion straight appears behind,
And troubles all the work. Through many a maze,
Perplex'd they struggle, changing every path,
O'erturning every purpose; then at last
Sit down dismay'd, and leave the entangled scene
For scorn to sport with. Such then is the abode
Of Folly in the mind; and such the shapes
In which she governs her obsequious train.

Through every scene of ridicule in things
To lead the tenor of my devious lay;
Through every swift occasion which the hand
Of laughter points at, when the mirthful sting
Distends her sallying nerves and choaks her tongue;
What were it but to count each crystal drop

Which Morning's dewy fingers on the blooms
Of May distil? Suffice it to have said,
Where'er the power of ridicule displays
Her quaint-ey'd visage, some incongruous form,
Some stubborn dissonance of things combin'd
Strikes on the quick observer: whether Pomp,
Or Praise, or Beauty, mix their partial claim
Where sordid fashions, where ignoble deeds,
Where foul deformity, are wont to dwell;
Or whether these with violation loath'd,
Invade resplendent Pomp's imperious mien,
The charms of Beauty, or the boast of Praise.

Ask we for what fair end, the Almighty Sire
In mortal bosoms wakes this gay contempt,
These grateful stings of laughter, from disgust
Educing pleasure? Wherefore but to aid
The tardy steps of reason, and at once
By this prompt impulse urge us to depress
The giddy aims of folly? Though the light

Of Truth slow dawning on the inquiring mind,
At length unfolds, through many a subtle tie,
How these uncouth disorders end at last
In public evil! yet benignant Heaven,
Conscious how dim the dawn of Truth appears
To thousands; conscious what a scanty pause
From labours and from care, the wider lot
Of humble life affords for studious thought
To scan the maze of nature; therefore stamp'd
The glaring scenes with characters of scorn,
As broad, as obvious, to the passing clown,
As to the letter'd sage's curious eye.

Such are the various aspects of the mind—
Some heavenly genius, whose unclouded thoughts
Attain that secret harmony which blends
The ætherial spirit with its mould of clay;
Oh! teach me to reveal the grateful charm
That searchless Nature o'er the sense of man
Diffuses, to behold, in lifeless things,

The inexpressive semblance of himself,
Of thought and passion. Mark the sable woods
That shade sublime yon mountain's nodding brow;
With what religious awe the solemn scene
Commands your steps! as if the reverend form
Of Minos or of Numa should forsake
The Elysian seats, and down the embowering glade
Move to your pausing eye! Behold the expanse
Of yon gay landscape, where the silver clouds
Flit o'er the heavens before the sprightly breeze:
Now their grey cincture skirts the doubtful sun;
Now streams of splendor, through their opening veil
Effulgent, sweep from off the gilded lawn
The aërial shadows; on the curling brook,
And on the shady margin's quivering leaves
With quickest lustre glancing, while you view
The prospect, say, within your cheerful breast
Plays not the lively sense of winning mirth
With clouds and sun-shine chequer'd, while the round
Of social converse, to the inspiring tongue

Of some gay nymph amid her subject train,
Moves all obsequious? Whence is this effect,
This kindred power of such discordant things?
Or flows their semblance from that mystic tone
To which the new-born mind's harmonious powers
At first were strung? Or rather from the links
Which artful custom twines around her frame?

For when the different images of things
By chance combin'd, have struck the attentive soul
With deeper impulse, or, connected long,
Have drawn her frequent eye; howe'er distinct
The external scenes, yet oft the ideas gain
From that conjunction an eternal tie,
And sympathy unbroken. Let the mind
Recall one partner of the various league,
Immediate, lo! the firm confederates rise,
And each his former station straight resumes:
One movement governs the consenting throng,
And all at once with rosy pleasure shine,

Or all are sadden'd with the glooms of care.
'Twas thus, if ancient fame the truth unfold,
Two faithful needles, from the informing touch
Of the same parent-stone, together drew
Its mystic virtue, and at first conspir'd
With fatal impulse quivering to the pole:
Then tho' disjoin'd by kingdoms tho' the main
Roll'd its broad surge betwixt, and different stars
Beheld their wakeful motions, yet preserv'd
The former friendship, and remember'd still
The alliance of their birth: whate'er the line
Which one possess'd, nor pause, nor quiet knew
The sure associate, ere with trembling speed
He found its path, and fixed unerring there.
Such is the secret union, when we feel
A song, a flower, a name, at once restore
Those long-connected scenes where first they mov'd
The attention: backward through her mazy walks
Guiding the wanton fancy to her scope,
To temples, courts, or fields; with all the band

Of painted forms, of passions and designs
Attendant: whence, if pleasing in itself,
The prospect from that sweet accession gains
Redoubled influence o'er the listening mind.

By these mysterious ties the busy power
Of memory her ideal train preserves
Entire; or when they would elude her watch,
Reclaims their fleeting footsteps from the waste
Of dark oblivion; thus collecting all
The various forms of being to present,
Before the curious aim of mimic art,
Their largest choice: like spring's unfolded blooms
Exhaling sweetness, that the skilful bee
May taste at will, from their selected s poils
To work her dulcet food. For not the expanse
Of living lakes in summer's noon-tide claim,
Reflects the bordering shade, and sun-bright heavens
With fairer semblance; not the sculptur'd gold
More faithful keeps the graver's lively trace,

Than he whose birth the sister powers of art
Propitious view'd, and from his genial star
Shed influence to the seeds of fancy kind;
Than his attemper'd bosom must preserve
The seal of Nature. There along unchang'd,
Her form remains. The balmy walks of May
There breathe perennial sweets: the trembling chord
Resounds for ever in the abstracted ear,
Melodious: and the virgin's radiant eye,
Superior to disease, to grief, and time,
Shines with unbating lustre. Thus at length
Endow'd with all that nature can bestow,
The child of fancy oft in silence bends
O'er these mixt treasures of his pregnant breast,
With conscious pride. From them he oft resolves
To frame he knows not what excelling things;
And win he knows not what sublime reward
Of praise and wonder. By degrees, the mind
Feels her young nerves dilate: the plastic powers
Labour for action: blind emotions heave

His bosom ; and with loveliest frenzy caught,
From earth to heaven he rolls his daring eye,
From heaven to earth. Anon ten thou and shapes,
Like spectres trooping to the wizard's call,
Flit swift before him. From the womb of earth,
From ocean's bed they come : the eternal heavens
Disclose their splendours, and the dark abyss
Pours out her births unknown. With fixed gaze
He marks the rising phantoms. Now compares
Their different forms ; now blends them, now divides,
Enlarges, and extenuates by turns ;
Opposes, ranges in fantastic bands,
And infinitely varies. Hither now,
Now thither fluctuates his inconstant aim,
With endless choice perplex'd. At length his plan
Begins to open. Lucid order dawns ;
And as from Chaos old the jarring seeds
Of Nature at the voice divine repair'd
Each to its place, till rosy earth unveil'd
Her fragrant bosom, and the joyful sun

Sprung up the blue serene; by swift degrees
Thus disentangled, his entire design
Emerges. Colours mingle, features join,
And lines converge: the fainter parts retire:
The fairer eminent in light advance;
And every image on its neighbour smiles.
Awhile he stands, and with a father's joy
Contemplates. Then with Promethéan art,
Into its proper vehicle he breathes
The fair conception; which, embodied thus,
And permanent, becomes to eyes or ears
An object ascertain'd: while thus inform'd,
The various organs of his mimic skill,
The consonance of sounds, the featur'd rock,
The shadowy picture and impassion'd verse,
Beyond their proper powers attract the soul
By that expressive semblance, while in sight
Of Nature's great original we scan
The lively child of art; while line by line,
And feature after feature we refer

To that sublime exemplar whence it stole
Those animating charms. Thus beauty's palm
Betwixt them wavering hangs: applauding love
Doubts where to choose; and mortal man aspires
To tempt creative praise. As when a cloud
Of gathering hail with limpid crusts of ice
Enclos'd and obvious to the beaming sun,
Collects his large effulgence; straight the heavens
With equal flames present on either hand
The radiant visage: Persia stands at gaze,
Appall'd; and on the brink of Ganges doubts
The snowy-vested seer, in Mithra's name,
To which the fragrance of the south shall burn,
To which his warbled orisons ascend.

Such various bliss the well-tun'd heart enjoys,
Favour'd of heaven! while, plung'd in sordid cares,
The unfeeling vulgar mocks the boon divine:
And harsh austerity, from whose rebuke
Young love and smiling wonder shrink away

Abash'd and chill of heart, with sager frowns
Condemns the fair enchantment. On my strain,
Perhaps even now, some cold, fastidious judge
Casts a disdainful eye; and calls my toil,
And calls the love and beauty which I sing,
The dream of folly. Thou, grave censor! say,
Is beauty then a dream, because the glooms
Of dulness hang too heavy on thy sense,
To let her shine upon thee? So the man
Whose eye ne'er open'd on the light of heaven,
Might smile with scorn while raptur'd vision tells
Of the gay-colour'd radiance flushing bright
O'er all creation. From the wise be far
Such gross unhallow'd pride; nor needs my song
Descend so low; but rather now unfold,
If human thought could reach, or worlds unfold,
By what mysterious fabric of the mind,
The deep-felt joys and harmony of sound
Result from airy motion; and from shape
The lovely phantoms of sublime and fair.

By what fine ties hath God connected things
When present in the mind, which in themselves
Have no connection? Sure the rising sun
O'er the cœrulean convex of the sea,
With equal brightness, and with equal warmth
Might roll his fiery orb; nor yet the soul
Thus feel her frame expanded, and her powers
Exulting in the splendor she beholds;
Like a young conqueror moving thro' the pomp
Of some triumphal day. When join'd at eve,
Soft-murmuring streams and gales of gentlest breath
Melodious Philomela's wakeful strain
Attemper, could not man's discerning ear
Through all its tones the sympathy pursue;
Nor yet this breath divine of nameless joy
Steal through his veins and fan the awaken'd heart,
Mild as the breeze, yet rapturous as the song.

But were not Nature still endow'd at large
With all which life requires, tho' unadorn'd

With such enchantment? Wherefore then her form
So exquisitely fair! her breath perfum'd
With such ætherial sweetness? whence her voice
Inform'd at will to raise or to depress
The impassion'd soul? and whence the robes of light
Which thus invest her with more lovely pomp
Than fancy can describe? Whence but from thee,
O Source divine of ever-flowing love,
And thy unmeasur'd goodness? Not content
With every food of life to nourish man,
By kind illusions of the wondering sense
Thou mak'st all Nature beauty to his eye,
Or music to his ear: well-pleas'd he scans
The goodly prospect; and with inward smiles
Treads the gay verdure of the painted plain;
Beholds the azure canopy of heaven,
And living lamps that over-arch his head
With more than regal splendor; bends his ears
To the full choir of water, air, and earth;
Nor heeds the pleasing error of his thought,

Nor doubts the painted green or azure arch,
Nor questions more the music's mingling sounds
Than space, or motion, or eternal time;
So sweet he feels their influence to attract
The fixed soul; to brighten the dull glooms
Of care, and make the destin'd road of life
Delightful to his feet. So fables tell,
The adventurous hero, bound on hard exploits,
Beholds with glad surprise, by secret spells
Of some kind sage, the patron of his toils,
A visionary paradise disclos'd
Amid the dubious wild: with streams, and shades,
And airy songs, the enchanted landscape smiles,
Cheers his long labours and renews his frame.

What then is taste, but these internal powers
Active, and strong, and feelingly alive
To each fine impulse? a discerning sense
Of decent and sublime, with quick disgust
From things deform'd, or disarrang'd, or gross

In species? This, nor gems, nor stores of gold,
Nor purple state, nor culture can bestow;
But God alone, when first his active hand
Imprints the secret bias of the soul.
He, mighty parent! wise and just in all,
Free as the vital breeze or light of heaven,
Reveals the charms of Nature. Ask the swain
Who journeys homeward from a summer-day's
Long labour, why, forgetful of his toils
And due repose, he loiters to behold
The sun-shine gleaming as thro' amber clouds,
O'er all the western sky; full soon, I ween,
His rude expression and untutor'd airs,
Beyond the power of language, will unfold
The form of beauty smiling at his heart,
How lovely! how commanding! But tho' heaven
In every breast hath sown these early seeds
Of love and admiration, yet in vain,
Without fair Culture's kind parental aid,
Without enlivening suns, and genial showers,

And shelter from the blast, in vain we hope
The tender plant should rear its blooming head,
Or yield the harvest promis'd in its spring.
Nor yet will every soil with equal stores
Repay the tiller's labour; or attend
His will, obsequious, whether to produce
The olive or the laurel. Different minds
Incline to different objects: one pursues
The vast alone, the wonderful, the wild;
Another sighs for harmony, and grace,
And gentlest beauty. Hence, when lightning fires
The arch of heaven, and thunders rock the ground,
When furious whirlwinds rend the howling air,
And Ocean, groaning from his lowest bed,
Heaves his tempestuous billows to the sky;
Amid the mighty uproar, while below
The nations tremble, Shakespear looks abroad
From some high cliff, superior, and enjoys
The elemental war. But Waller longs,
All on the margin of some flowery stream

To spread his careless limbs amid the cool
Of plantain shades, and to the listening deer
The tale of slighted vows and love's disdain
Resound soft-warbling, all the live-long day:
Consenting Zephyr sighs; the weeping rill
Joins in his plaint, melodious; mute the groves;
And hill and dale with all their echoes mourn.
Such and so various are the tastes of men.

Oh! blest of heaven, whom not the languid songs
Of luxury, the syren! not the bribes
Of sordid wealth, nor all the gaudy spoils
Of pageant honour can seduce to leave
Those ever-blooming sweets, which from the store
Of Nature fair imagination culls
To charm the enliven'd soul! What tho' not all
Of mortal offspring can attain the heights
Of envied life; though only few possess
Patrician treasures of imperial state?
Yet Nature's care, to all her children just,

With richer treasures and an ampler state
Endows at large whatever happy man
Will deign to use them. His the city's pomp,
The rural honours his. Whate'er adorns
The princely dome, the column and the arch,
The breathing marbles and the sculptur'd gold,
Beyond the proud possessor's narrow claim,
His tuneful breast enjoys. For him, the Spring
Distils her dews, and from the silken gem
Its lucid leaves unfolds: for him, the hand
Of Autumn tinges every fertile branch
With blooming gold, and blushes like the morn.
Each passing Hour sheds tribute from her wings;
And still new beauties meet his lonely walk,
And loves unfelt attract him. Not a breeze
Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes
The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain
From all the tenants of the warbling shade
Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake
Fresh pleasure, unreprov'd. Nor thence partakes

Fresh pleasure only: for the attentive mind,
By this harmonious action on her powers
Becomes herself harmonious: wont so oft
In outward things to meditate the charm
Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home
To find a kindred order, to exert
Within herself this elegance of love,
This fair inspir'd delight: her temper'd powers
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.
But if to ampler prospects, if to gaze
On Nature's form, where, negligent of all
These lesser graces, she assumes the port
Of that eternal Majesty that weigh'd
The world's foundations, if to these the mind
Exalts her daring eye; then mightier far
Will be the change, and nobler. Would the forms
Of servile custom cramp her generous powers?
Would sordid policies, the barbarous growth
Of ignorance and rapine, bow her down

To tame pursuits, to indolence and fear?
Lo! she appeals to Nature, to the winds
And rolling waves, the sun's unwearied course,
The elements and seasons: all declare
For what the eternal Maker has ordain'd
The powers of man: we feel within ourselves
His energy divine: he tells the heart,
He meant, he made us to behold and love
What he beholds and loves, the general orb
Of life and being; to be great like him,
Beneficent and active. Thus the men
Whom Nature's works can charm, with God himself
Hold converse; grow familiar, day by day,
With his conceptions; act upon his plan:
And form to his, the relish of their souls.

NOTES

ON THE

FIRST BOOK.

Ver. 151. *Say, why was man,* &c.

IN apologizing for the frequent negligences of the sublimest authors of Greece, "Those god-like "geniuses," says Longinus, "were well assured, "that Nature had not intended man for a low-"spirited or ignoble being: but bringing us into "life and the midst of this wide universe, as before "a multitude assembled at some heroic solemnity, "that we might be spectators of all her magnifi-"cence, and candidates high in emulation for the "prize of glory; she has therefore implanted in

" our souls an inextinguishable love of every thing
" great and exalted, of every thing which appears
" divine beyond our comprehension. Whence it
" comes to pass, that even the whole world is not
" an object sufficient for the depth and rapidity of
" human imagination, which often sallies forth be-
" yond the limits of all that surrounds us. Let
" any man cast his eye through the whole circle of
" our existence, and consider how especially it
" abounds in excellent and grand objects; he will
" soon acknowledge for what enjoyments and pur-
" suits we were destined. Thus by the very pro-
" pensity of Nature we are led to admire, not little
" springs or shallow rivulets, however clear and
" delicious, but the Nile, the Rhine, the Danube,
" and, much more than all, the Ocean, &c."
DIONYS. LONG. de Sublim. § xxiv.

Ver. 202. *The empyreal waste.*

" Ne se peut-il point qu'il y a un grand espace

" au dela de la region des etoiles? Que se soit le " ciel empyrée, ou non, toujours cet espace im- " mense qui environne toute cette region, pourra " etre rempli de bonheur et de gloire. Il pourra " etre concu comme l'ocean, où se rendent les " fleuves de toutes les creatures bienheureuses, " quand elles seront venues à luer perfection dans " le systeme des etoiles." LEIBNITZ dans la Theodicée, part i. § 19.

Ver. 204. *Whose unfading light*, &c.

It was a notion of the great Mr. Huygens, that there may be fixed stars at such a distance from our solar system, as that their light should not have had time to reach us, even from the creation of the world to this day.

Ver. 234. ——*the neglect*
Of all familiar prospects, &c.

It is here said, that in consequence of the love

of novelty, objects which at first were highly delightful to the mind, lose that effect by repeated attention to them. But the instance of *habit* is opposed to this observation; for *there*, objects at first distasteful are in time rendered entirely agreeable by repeated attention.

The difficulty in this case will be removed, if we consider, that, when objects at first agreeable, lose that influence by frequently recurring, the mind is wholly *passive*, and the perception *involuntary;* but habit, on the other hand, generally supposes *choice* and *activity* accompanying it: so that the pleasure arises here not from the object, but from the mind's *conscious* determination of its own activity; and consequently increases in proportion to the frequency of that determination.

It will still be urged perhaps, that a familiarity with disagreeable objects renders them at length acceptable, even when there is no room for the mind to *resolve* or *act* at all. In this case, the appearance must be accounted for, one of these ways.

The pleasure from habit may be merely negitive. The object at first gave uneasiness : this uneasiness gradually wears off as the object grows familiar: and the mind, finding it at last entirely removed, reckons its situation really pleasureable, compared with what it had experienced before.

The dislike conceived of the object at first, might be owing to prejudice or want of attention. Consequently the mind, being necessitated to review it often, may at length perceive its own mistake, and be reconciled to what it had looked on with aversion. In which case, a sort of instinctive justice naturally leads it to make amends for the injury, by running toward the other extreme of fondness and attachment.

Or lastly, though the object itself should always continue disagreeable, yet circumstances of pleasure or good fortune may occur along with it. Thus an association may arise in the mind, and the object never be remembered without those pleasing cir-

cumstances attending it; by which means the disagreeable impression which it at first occasioned will in time be quite obliterated.

Ver. 240. ——— *this desire*
Of objects new *and* strange——

These two ideas are often confounded; though it is evident the mere *novelty* of an object makes it agreeable, even where the mind is not affected with the least degree of *wonder*: whereas *wonder* indeed always implies *novelty*, being never excited by common or well-known appearances. But the pleasure in both cases is explicable from the same final cause, the acquisition of knowledge and enlargement of our views of Nature; on this account, it is natural to treat of them together.

Ver. 374. *Truth and good are one,*
And beauty dwells in them, &c.

"Do you imagine," say Socrates to Arsitippus,

" that what is good is not beautiful? Have you " not observed that these appearances always coin- " cide? Virtue, for instance, in the same respect " as to which we call it good, is ever acknowledged " to be beautiful also. In the characters of men " we always * join the two denominations together. " The beauty of human bodies corresponds, in " like manner, with that œconomy of parts which " constitutes them good; and in every circum- " stance of life the same object is constantly ac- " counted both beautiful and good, inasmuch as it " answers the purposes for which it was designed." XENOPHONT. Memorab. Socrat. l. iii. c. 8.

This excellent observation has been illustrated and extended by the noble restorer of ancient philosophy: *see the Characteristics*, vol. ii. p. 339 and 422; and vol. iii. p. 181. And another ingenious

* This the Athenians did in a particular manner, by the word καλοκαγαθὸς, καλοκαγαθία.

author has particularly shewn, that it holds in the general laws of Nature, in the works of art, and the conduct of the sciences: *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Treat. i. § 8. As to the connection between *beauty* and *truth*, there are two opinions concerning it. Some philosophers assert an independent and invariable law in Nature, in consequence of which "all rational beings must "alike perceive beauty in some certain propor- "tions, and deformity in the contrary." And this necessity being supposed the same with that which commands the assent or dissent of the understanding, it follows of course that *beauty* is founded on the universal and unchangeable law of *truth*.

But others there are, who believe *beauty* to be merely a relative and arbitrary thing; that indeed it was a benevolent provision in Nature to annex so delightful a sensation to those objects which are *best and most perfect in themselves*, that so we might be engaged to the choice of them at once, and without

staying to infer their *usefulness* from their structure and effects; but that it is not impossible, in a physical sense, that two beings, of equal capacities for *truth*, should perceive, one of them *beauty*, and the other *deformity*, in the same proportions. And upon this supposition, by that *truth* which is always connected with *beauty*, nothing more can be meant than the conformity of any object to those proportions upon which, after careful examination, the beauty of that species is found to depend. Polycletus, for instance, a famous ancient sculptor, from an accurate mensuration of the several parts of the most perfect human bodies, deduced a canon or system of proportions, which was the rule of all succeeding artists. Suppose a statue modelled according to this: a man of mere natural taste, upon looking at it, without entering into its proportions, confesses and admires its *beauty:* whereas a professor of the art applies his measures to the head, the neck, or the hand, and, without attending to its beauty, pronounces the workmanship to be *just* and *true*.

Ver. 492. *As when Brutus rose, &c.*

Cicero himself describes this fact—"Cæsare "interfecto—statim cruentum altè extollens M. "Brutus pugionem, Ciceronem nominatim excla- "mavit, atque ei recuperatam libertatem est gratu- "latus." Cic. Phillipp. ii. 12.

Ver. 548. *Where virtue rising from the awful depth*
Of truth's mysterious bosom, &c.

According to the opinion of those who assert *moral obligation* to be founded on an immutable and universal law; and that which is usually called the *moral sense*, to be determined by the peculiar temper of the imagination and earliest associations of ideas.

Ver. 591. *Lycéum.*

The school of Aristotle.

Ver. 592. *Academus.*

The school of Plato.

Ver. 594. *Ilyssus.*

One of the rivers on which Athens was situated. Plato, in some of his finest dialogues, lays the scene of conversation with Socrates on its banks.

NOTES

ON THE

SECOND BOOK.

Ver. 19. *At last the Muses rose, &c.*

ABOUT the age of Hugh Capet, founder of the third race of French kings, the poets of Provence were in high reputation; a sort of strolling bards or rhapsodists, who went about the courts of princes and noblemen, entertaining them at festivals with music and poetry. They attempted both the epic ode, and satire; and abounded in a wild and fantastic vein of fable, partly allegorical, and partly founded on traditionary legends of the Saracen wars. These were the rudiments of Italian poetry. But their taste and composition must have been extremely

barbarous, as we may judge by those who followed the turn of their fable in much politer times; such as Boiardo, Bernardo, Tasso, Ariosto, &c.

Ver. 21. *Valclusa.*

The famous retreat of Francisco Petrarcha, the father of Italian poetry, and his mistress Laura, a lady of Avignon.

Ver. 22. *Arno.*

The river which runs by Florence, the birth-place of Dante and Boccacio.

Ver. 23. *Parthenope.*

Or Naples, the birth-place of Sannazaro. The great Torquato Tasso was born at Sorrento, in the kingdom of Naples.

Ver. 23. ——*the rage*
Of dire ambition, &c.

This relates to the cruel wars among the repub-

lics of Italy, and abominable politics of its little princes, about the fifteenth century. These at last, in conjunction with the Papal power, entirely extinguished the spirit of liberty in that country, and established that abuse of the fine arts which has been since propagated over all Europe.

Ver. 30. *Thus from their guardians torn*, &c.

Nor were they only losers by the separation. For philosophy itself, to use the words of a noble philosopher, "being thus severed by the sprightly arts "and sciences, must consequently grow dronish, "insipid, pedantic, useless, and directly opposite "to the real knowledge and practice of the world." Insomuch that "a Gentleman," says another excellent writer, "cannot easily bring himself to like so "austere and ungainly a form; so greatly is it "changed from what was once the delight of the "finest Gentlemen of antiquity, and their recrea-"tion after the hurry of public affairs!" From this condition it cannot be recovered but by uniting it

once more with the works of imagination; and we have had the pleasure of observing a very great progress made towards their union in England within these few years. It is hardly possible to conceive them at a greater distance from each other than at the Revolution, when Locke stood at the head of one party, and Dryden of the other. But the general spirit of liberty, which has ever since been growing, naturally invited our men of wit and genius to improve that influence which the arts of persuasion gave them with the people, by applying them to subjects of importance to society. Thus poetry and eloquence became considerable; and philosophy is now of course obliged to borrow of their embellishments, in order even to gain audience with the public.

Ver. 157. *From Passion's power alone*, &c.

This very mysterious kind of pleasure, which is often found in the exercise of passions generally counted painful, has been taken notice of by several

authors. Lucretius resolves it into self-love:

"Suave Mari magno," &c. lib. ii. 1.

As if a man was never pleased in being moved at the distress of a tragedy, without a cool reflection that though these fictitious personages were so unhappy, yet he himself was perfectly at ease and in safety. The ingenious author of the *Reflections Critiques sur le Poesie, & sur la Peinture*, accounts for it by the general delight which the mind takes in its own activity, and the abhorrence it feels of an indolent and inattentive state: and this, joined with the moral approbation of its own temper, which attends these emotions when natural and just, is certainly the true foundation of the pleasure, which, as it is the origin and basis of tragedy and epic, deserved a very particular consideration in this poem.

Ver. 304, *Inhabitant of earth*, &c.

The account of the œconomy of Providence here introduced, as the most proper to calm and satisfy

the mind when under the compunction of private evils, seems to have come originally from the Pythagorean school: but of the ancient philosophers, Plato has most largely insisted upon it, has established it with all the strength of his capacious understanding, and ennobled it with all the magnificence of his divine imagination. He has one passage so full and clear on this head, that I am persuaded the reader will be pleased to see it here, though somewhat long. Addressing himself to such as are not satisfied concerning Divine Providence: "The Being who pre-
"sides over the whole," says he, "has disposed and
"complicated all things for the happiness and vir-
"tue of the whole, every part of which, according
"to the extent of its influence, does and suffers
"what is fit and proper. One of these parts is yours,
"O unhappy man, which though in itself most in-
"considerable and minute, yet being connected with
"the universe, ever seeks to co-operate with that
"supreme order. You in the mean time are igno-

" rant of the very end for which all particular
" natures are brought into existence, that the all-
" comprehending nature of the whole may be per-
" fect and happy; existing as it does, not for your
" sake, but the cause and reason of your existence,
" which, as in the symmetry of every artificial work,
" must of necessity concur with the general design
" of the artist, and be subservient to the whole of
" which it is a part. Your complaint therefore is
" ignorant and groundless; since, according to the
" various energy of creation, and the common laws
" of Nature, there is a constant provision of that
" which is best at the same time for you and for the
" whole.—For the governing Intelligence clearly
" beholding all the actions of animated and self-
" moving creatures, and that mixture of good and
" evil which diversifies them, considered first of all
" by what disposition of things, and by what situ-
" ation of each individual in the general system,
" vice might be depressed and subdued, and virtue

" made secure of victory and happiness, with the " greatest facility, and in the highest degree possible: " In this manner he ordered through the entire cir- " cle of being, the internal constitution of every " mind, where should be its station in the universal " fabric, and through what variety of circumstances " it should proceed in the whole tenour of its " existence." He goes on in his sublime manner to assert a future state of retribution, " as well for " those who, by the exercise of good dispositions " being harmonized and assimilated into the divine " virtue, are consequently removed to a place of " unblemished sanctity and happiness; as of those " who by the most flagitious arts have risen from " contemptible beginnings to the greatest affluence " and power, and whom you therefore look upon " as unanswerable instances of negligence in the " gods, because you are ignorant of the purposes " to which they are subservient, and in what man- " ner they contribute to that supreme intention of " good to the whole." PLATO de Leg. x. 16.

This theory has been delivered of late, especially abroad, in a manner which subverts the freedom of human actions; whereas Plato appears very careful to preserve it, and has been in that respect imitated by the best of his followers.

Ver. 321. —— *one might rise,*
One order, &c.

See the Meditations of Antoninus, and the Characteristics, passim.

Ver. 355. *The best and fairest*, &c.

This opinion is so old, that Timæus Locrus calls the Supreme Being δημιεργὸς τῶ βελτίονῳ, "the "artificer of that which is best;" and represents him as resolving in the beginning to produce the most excellent work, and as copying the world most exactly from his own intelligible and essential idea; "so that it yet remains, as it was at first, perfect "in beauty, and will never stand in need of any

" correction or improvement." There can be no room for a caution here, to understand the expressions, not of any particular circumstances of human life separately considered, but of the sum of universal system of life and being. See also the vision at the end of the Theodicée of Leibnitz.

Ver. 305. *As flame ascends*, &c.

This opinion, though not held by Plato nor any of the ancients, is yet a very natural consequence of his principles. But the disquisition is too complex and extensive to be entered upon here.

Ver. 755. *Philip.*

The Macedonian.

NOTES

ON THE

THIRD BOOK.

Ver. 18. —— *Where the powers*
Of Fancy, &c.

THE influence of the Imagination on the conduct of life, is one of the most important points in moral philosophy. It were easy by an induction of facts to prove that the Imagination directs almost all the passions, and mixes with almost every circumstance of action or pleasure. Let any man, even of the coldest head and soberest industry, analyse the idea of what he calls his interest; he will find that it consists chiefly of certain degrees of decency, beauty, and order, variously combined into one system, the idol which he seeks to enjoy by labour, hazard, and

self-denial. It is on this account of the last consequence to regulate these images by the standard of Nature, and the general good; otherwise the imagination, by heightening some objects beyond their real excellence and beauty, or by representing others in a more odious or terrible shape than they deserve, may of course engage us in pursuits utterly inconsistent with the moral order of things.

If it be objected that this account of things supposes the passions to be merely accidental, whereas there appears in some a natural and hereditary disposition to certain passions prior to all circumstances of education or fortune; it may be answered, that though no man is born *ambitious* or a *miser*, yet he may inherit from his parents a peculiar temper or complexion of mind, which shall render his imagination more liable to be struck with some particular objects, consequently dispose him to form opinions of good and ill, and entertain passions of a particular turn. Some men, for instance, by the

original frame of their minds, are more delighted with the vast and magnificent; others, on the contrary, with the elegant and gentle aspects of Nature. And it is very remarkable, that the disposition of the moral powers is always similar to this of the Imagination; that those who are most inclined to admire prodigious and sublime objects in the physical world, are also most inclined to applaud examples of fortitude and heroic virtue in the moral. While those who are charmed rather with the *delicacy* and *sweetness* of colours, and forms, and sounds, never fail in like manner to yield the preference to the softer scenes of virtue, and the sympathies of a domestic life. And this is sufficient to account for the objection.

Among the ancient philosophers though we have several hints concerning this influence of the Imagination upon the morals among the remains of the Socratic school, yet the Stoics were the first who paid it a due attention. Zeno, their founder, thought

it impossible to preserve any tolerable regularity in life, without frequently inspecting those Pictures or appearances of things, which the imagination offers to the mind (Diog. Laërt. l. vii.) The meditations of M. Aurelius, and the discourses of Epictetus, are full of the same sentiment; insomuch that the latter makes the Χρῆσις οἵα δεῖ φαντασιῶν, or "right "management of the fancies," the only thing for which we are accountable to Providence, and without which a man is no other than stupid or frantic. Arrian. l. i. c. 12. & l. ii. c. 22. See also the Characteristics, vol. i. from p. 313 to 321, where this Stoical doctrine is embellished with all the elegance and graces of Plato.

Ver. 75. —— *how Folly's awkward arts*, &c.

Notwithstanding the general influence of *ridicule* on private and civil life, as well as on learning and the sciences, it has been almost constantly neglected or misrepresented by divines especially. The man-

ner of treating these subjects in th science of human nature, should be precisely the same as in natural philosophy; from particular facts to investigate the stated order in which they appear, and then apply the general law, thus discovered, to the explication of other appearances, and the improvement of useful arts.

Ver. 84. *Behold the foremost band*, &c.

The first and most general source of ridicule in the characters of men, is vanity, or self-applause for some desirable quality or possession which evidently does not belong to those who assume it.

Ver. 121. *Then comes the second order*, &c.

Ridicule from the same vanity, where, though the possession be real, yet no merit can arise from it, because of some particular circumstances, which, though obvious to the spectator, are yet overlooked by the ridiculous character.

Ver. 152. *Another tribe succeeds*, &c.

Ridicule from a notion of excellence in particular objects disproportioned to their intrinsic value, and inconsistent with the order of Nature.

Ver. 191. *But now, ye gay*, &c.

Ridicule from a notion of excellence, when the object is absolutely odious or contemptible. This is the highest degree of the ridiculous; as in the affectation of diseases or vices.

Ver. 207. *Thus far triumphant*, &c.

Ridicule from false shame, or groundless fear.

Ver. 228. *Last of the motley bands*, &c.

Ridicule from the ignorance of such things as our circumstances require us to know.

Ver. 248. *Suffice it to have said*, &c.

By comparing these general sources of ridicule

with each other, and examining the ridiculous in other objects, we may obtain a general definition of it, equally applicable to every species. The most important circumstance of this definition is laid down in the lines referred to; but others more minute we shall subjoin here. Aristotle's account of the matter seems both imperfect and false: the ridiculous is "some certain fault or turpitude without "pain, and not destructive to its subject." (Poët. c. 5.) For allowing it to be true, as it is not, that the ridiculous is never accompanied with pain, yet we might produce many instances of such a fault or turpitude, which cannot with any tolerable propriety be called ridiculous. So that the definition does not distinguish the thing designed. Nay farther; even when we perceive the turpitude tending to the destruction of its subject, we may still be sensible of a ridiculous appearance, till the ruin become imminent, and the keener sensations of pity or terror banish the ludicrous apprehension from our minds. For the

sensation of ridicule is not a bare perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas; but a passion or emotion of the mind consequential to that perception. So that the mind may perceive the agreement or disagreement, and yet not feel the ridiculous, because it is engrossed by a more violent emotion. Thus it happens that some men think those objects ridiculous, to which others cannot endure to apply the name; because in them they excite a much intenser and more important feeling. And this difference, among other causes, has brought a good deal of confusion into this question.

"That which makes objects ridiculous, is some "ground of admiration or esteem connected with "other more general circumstances comparatively "worthless or deformed; or it is some circumstance "of turpitude or deformity connected with what is "in general excellent or beautiful: the inconsistent "properties existing either in the objects themselves, "or in the apprehension of the person to whom

" they relate; belonging always to the same order " or class of being; imply sentiment or design; and " exciting no acute or vehement emotion of the " heart."

To prove the several parts of this definition: "The " appearance of excellency or beauty connected with " a general condition, comparatively sordid or " deformed," is ridiculous: for instance, pompous pretensions of wisdom joined with ignorance or folly in the Socrates of Aristophanes; and the ostentations of military glory with cowardice and stupidity in the Thraso of Terence.

The appearance of deformity or turpitude in " conjunction with what is in general excellent or " venerable," is also ridiculous: for instance, the personal weakness of a magistrate appearing in the solemn and public functions of his station.

" The incongruous properties may either exist in " the objects themselves, or in apprehension of the " person to whom they relate:" in the last-men-

tioned instance, they both exist in the objects; in the instances from Aristophanes and Terence, one of them is objective and real, the other only founded in the apprehension of the ridiculous character.

"The inconsistent properties must belong to the "same order or class of being." A coxcomb in fine cloaths, bedaubed by accident in foul weather, is a ridiculous object; because his general apprehension of excellence and esteem is referred to the splendour and expence of his dress. A man of sense and merit, in the same circumstances, is not counted ridiculous: because the general ground of excellence and esteem in him is, both in fact and in his own apprehension, of a very different species.

"Every ridiculous object implies sentiment or "design." A column placed by an architect without a capital or base, is laughed at: the same column in a ruin causes a very different sensation.

And lastly, "the occurence must excite no acute "or vehement emotion of the heart," such as Terror,

Pity, or Indignation; for in that case, as was observed above, the mind is not at leisure to contemplate the ridiculous.

Ver. 259. *Ask we for what fair end*, &c.

Since it is beyond all contradiction evident that we have a *natural* sense or feeling of the ridiculous, and since so good a reason may be assigned to justify the Supreme Being for bestowing it; one cannot without astonishment reflect on the conduct of those men who imagine it is for the service of true religion to vilify and blacken it without distinction, and endeavour to persuade us that it is never applied but in a bad cause. Ridicule is not concerned with mere speculative truth or falsehood. It is not in abstract propositions or theorems, but in actions and passions, good and evil, beauty and deformity, that we find materials for it; and all these terms are *relative*, implying approbation or blame. To ask them whether *ridicule be a test of truth*, is, in other

words, to ask whether that which is ridiculous can be *morally true*, can be just and becoming; or whether that which is just and becoming, can be ridiculous? A question that does not deserve a serious answer. For it is most evident, that, as in a metaphysical proposition offered to the understanding for its assent, the faculty of reason examines the terms of the proposition, and finding one idea, which was supposed equal to another, to be in fact unequal, of consequence rejects the proposition as a falsehood; so, in objects offered to the mind for its esteem and applause, the faculty of ridicule, finding an incongruity in the claim, urges the mind to reject it with laughter and contempt. When therefore, we observe such a claim obtruded upon mankind, and the inconsistent circumstances carefully concealed from the eye of the public, it is our business, if the matter be of importance to society, to drag out those latent circumstances, and, by setting them in full view, to convince the world how ridiculous the

claim is: and thus a double advantage is gained; for we both detect the *moral falsehood* sooner than in the way of speculative inquiry, and impress the minds of men with a stronger sense of the vanity and error of its authors. And this and no more is meant by the application of ridicule.

But it is said, the practice is dangerous, and may be inconsistent with the regard we owe to objects of real dignity and excellence. I answer, the practice fairly managed can never be dangerous; men may be dishonest in obtruding circumstances foreign to the object, and we may be inadvertent in allowing those circumstances to impose upon us: but the sense of ridicule always judges right. The Socrates of Aristophanes is as *truly* ridiculous a character as ever was drawn:—true; but it is not the character of Socrates, the divine moralist and father of ancient wisdom. What then? did the ridicule of the poet hinder the philosopher from detecting and disclaiming those foreign circumstances which he had falsely

introduced into his character, and thus rendered the satirist doubly ridiculous in his turn ? no ; but it nevertheless had an ill influence on the minds of the people. And so has the reasoning of Spinoza made many atheists : he has founded it indeed on suppositions utterly false ; but allow him these, and his conclusions are unavoidably true. And if we must reject the use of ridicule, because, by the imposition of false circumstances, things may be made to seem ridiculous, which are not so in themselves ; why we ought not in the same manner to reject the use of reason, because, by proceeding on false principles, conclusions will appear true which are impossible in Nature, let the vehement and obstinate declaimers against ridicule determine.

Ver. 285. *The inexpressive semblance*, &c.

This similitude is the foundation of almost all the ornaments of poetic diction.

Ver. 326. *Two faithful needles*, &c.

See the elegant poem recited by Cardinal Bembo, in the character of Lucretius; STRADA Prolus. vi. Academ. 2. c. v.

Ver. 348. *By these mysterious ties*, &c.

The act of remembering seems almost wholly to depend on the association of ideas.

Ver. 411. *Into its proper vehicle*, &c.

This relates to the different sorts of corporeal mediums, by which the ideas of the artists are rendered palpable to the senses; as by sounds in music; by lines and shadows in painting; by diction in poetry, &c.

Ver. 547. ——— *One pursues*
The vast alone, &c.

See the note on ver. 18 of this book.

Ver. 558. *Waller longs*, &c.

"Oh! how I long my careless limbs to lay
"Under the plantain shade; and all the day
"With amorous airs my fancy entertain, &c.

WALLER, Battle of Sum. Islands, Canto I.

And again,

"While in the park I sing, the listening deer
"Attend my passion, and forget to fear," &c.

At Penshurst.

Ver. 593. *Not a breeze*, &c.

That this account may not appear rather poetically extravagant than just in philosophy, it may be proper to produce the sentiment of one of the greatest, wisest, and best of men on this head; one so little to be suspected of partiality in the case, that he reckons it among those favours for which he was especially thankful to the gods, that they had not suffered him to make any great proficiency

in the arts of eloquence and poetry, lest by that means he should have been diverted from pursuits of more importance to his high station. Speaking of the beauty of universal Nature, he observes, that "there is a pleasing and graceful aspect in every "object we perceive," when once we consider its connection with that general order. He instances in many things which at first sight would be thought rather deformities; and then adds, "that a man who "enjoys a sensibility of temper, with a just compre- "hension of the universal order, will discern many "amiable things, not credible to every mind, but "to those alone who have entered into an honor- "able familiarity with Nature, and her works."— M. ANTONIN. iii. 2.

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